The Ascetical Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian

Classic Reprint of the 1923 English Translation

St Isaac the Syrian

MYSTIC TREATISES BY

ISAAC OF NINEVEH

TRANSLATED FROM BEDJAN'S SYRIAC TEXT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND REGISTERS

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SIX TREATISES ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF EXCELLENCE [1])

I

The fear of God is the foundation of excellence: for excellence is said to be the offspring of faith. It is sown in a man's heart, when he allows his mind to confine the wandering impulses to continual meditation on the order of things to come, away from the distractions of the world. As to the foundation of
2 excellence, the first among its peculiar elements is the concentration of the self, by freeing it from practical things, upon the enlightened word of the straight and holy ways, the word that by the inspired Psalmist is called the teacher.

There is scarcely to be found a man who is able to bear honours, or possibly such an one exists not; because man is very prone to err, even if he be an angel in his way.

The foundation of the way of life consists in accustoming the mind to the words of God and the practice of patience. For the draught provided by the former is helpful towards acquiring perfection in the latter; and, further, increased development towards accomplishment in the latter, will cause a heightened desire of the former. And the help provided by both of them will quickly bring about the rise of the whole building.

No one is able to come near to God save only he who is far from the world. For I do not call separation the departure from the body, but from the bodily things.

Excellence consists therein that a man in his mind be a void as regards the world. As long as the senses are occupied with [outward] things, it is not possible for the heart to rest from

1) Title taken from the end of VI on p. 99. All reference applies to the pages of Bedjan's text.

imagining them. Nor do the affections cease, nor evil thoughts end except in the desert and the wilderness.

While the soul has not yet become drunk by the faith in God, in that it has received an impression of its powers, the weakness of the senses cannot be healed and it is not able to tread down with force visible matter which is a screen before what is within and not perceived [by the senses].

3 Reason is the cause of freedom[1]) and the fruit of both liability to err. Without the first, the second cannot be. And where the second fails, there is the third bound as it were with halters.

When grace is abundant in man, then the fear of death is despised on account of the love of righteousness. He finds many arguments in his soul [proving] that it is becoming to bear troubles for the sake of the fear of God. And those things which are supposed to injure the body, and to repel nature injustly, which consequently are of a nature to cause suffering, are reckoned in his eye as nothing in comparison with what is expected to be. And his mind convinces him firmly of the fact that it is not possible to recognize truth without gaining experience of the affections, and that God bestows great care upon man, and that he is not abandoned to chance. Especially those who are trained in praying unto Him and who bear suffering for His sake, see [these truths] clearly [as if painted] in colours. But when little faith takes root in our heart, then all these things are felt as contrary, not as serving for testing us.

And that we are not always successful in trusting in God, and that God does not care for thee as it is supposed, is often insinuated by those who lay ambushes and shoot their arrows in the darkness.

The foundation of man's true life, is the fear of God. And this does not consent to dwell in the soul as long as there 4 exists the distraction of [outward] things. For the heart, by the service of the senses, is turned away from the delight in God.

The inward impulses are bound up in their sensible faculty with the senses administering to them.

The doubt of the heart introduces fear into the soul. But faith is able to make manly the mind, even under the cutting off of the limbs. As long as the love of the body is strong in thee, thou art not able to be courageous and without fear

1) This term has nearly always the meaning of free will. Cf. Introduction.

because of the many adversaries that are constantly present in the neighbourhood of him who is loved.

If any one is fond of honour, he cannot be without causes of distress.

There is no man, whose mind suffers not likewise a change with things, in whatever respect it may be.

If there is a second apperception of the senses, which generates and gives birth to desire, as Euagrius says, then those who dwell in doubt must keep silence, promising to preserve their mind in peace.

Not that one is chaste from whom evil impulses that intended to combat him, are withheld, but he whose uprightness of heart renders chaste the gaze of his mind, so that he does not audaciously enter upon lascivious thoughts; and the saintliness of his heart is testified by the gaze of his pupils, which are guarded faithfully, so that bashfulness screens, like a curtain, the hidden place of his thoughts. So that his purity [1], like that of a chaste virgin, is faithfully guarded for Christ.

There is nothing so apt to banish lascivious customs from the soul, and to restrain inciting memories which quicken the wild flames in the body, as burning for the love of teachings, and prosecuting investigations concerning the meaning of the words of the scriptures.

When the impulses are immersed in delight, after [having tasted] the wisdom contained in the [divine] words, by means of the faculty that absorbs information from them, then every man will leave the body behind him. Forgetting the world and all that is in it, he will also banish from his soul all recollections on which are based the images of the material world. And often the soul in its thoughts during ecstasy will desist from the use of the wonted deliberations — natural practice — by reason of the novel [experiences] which reach it from the sea of their mysteries.

Even when the mind is floating on its upper waters, without being able to make its impulses deep as the depth of the waters (so that it can see all the treasures in its abysses) — still meditation, by its [power of] love, will have sufficient force to bind the thoughts firmly together with thoughts of ecstasy so that they are checked from thinking of and running after

1) Reading ܕܟܝܘܬܗ in stead of ܕܟܝܘܬܗ̇

the nature of the body. As one of those, who are clad with God says: "Because the heart is weak, it is not able to bear the evil influences that reach it from without, nor the struggle within. For you know, that the evil thoughts of the body are strong. And if the heart is not accustomed to teachings, it is not possible to bear the troubled thoughts of the body.

As the heaviness of the weight [impedes] the quick swaying too and fro of the tongue of the balance in the wild winds, so bashfulness and fear [impede] the aberration of the mind. And that which is an indication of deficiency in the former, is also a [sign] of the dominion of freedom [1]) in the latter.
6 Just as in that case any additional decrease is the cause of the scales swaying too and froo with greater ease, having no solid foundation, so in this case, by the abolition of fear from the soul on account of freedom, the balance of the mind is able to turn aside quickly. So the faculty of emotion comes in the consequence of freedom; and inconstancy of the mind is the consequence of the faculty of aberration [2]). Be wise enough to lay a foundation for thy course in the way of God; in a few days it will bring thee before the gate of the Kingdom, without windings in the way [3]).

Do not in the way of those who are educated by teachers look at the words which in the way of test, are intended to elevate thy behaviour, in order that thy soul may be elevated by the height of sight that is in them. Distinguish the purport of the word in all the stories thou findest in the scriptures; so thou wilt be able to make thy soul deep so that it may dwell with the great wisdom that is in the writings of enlightened men.

Those who, by grace, are directed in their behaviour towards illumination, perceive constantly as it were an intelligible ray running between the words [of the scriptures]. This ray distinguishes for the mind the simple speech from those things that are said in spiritual loftiness in order to expand the soul.

He who simply reads lofty words, his heart will also remain simple and devoid of the holy power, that imparts to the heart a sweet taste by the meanings that stupefy the soul.

7 All things are accustomed to move towards that which is

1) Cf. p. 2 note 1.

2) Cf. Introduction.

3) Cf. *Book of the Dove*, Sentence 85: "Every serene soul seeks its original country, and directs itself towards it on the straight way, which is the nearest". And the inscription of chapter XVII: On the short paths to God.

akin [to them]. And the soul that possesses something of the spirit, on hearing anything wherein a spiritual force is hidden, fervently embraces that which it hears; and yet a tale that is told spiritually and wherein a great force is hidden, is not able to arouse every one unto admiration.

A word concerning excellence requires a heart free from the earth and earthly occupations.

If a man's mind is beset with care for transitory things, tales concerning excellence will not incite his thought to the desiring of its possession.

Solution from matter precedes the bonds in God [1]). And though, as if by Providence of Grace, in some people the latter precede the former, so that love covers love, in the usual order of Providence the common sequence is otherwise. So thou hast to keep the common order. If Grace in thee comes first, it is for its own sake. If it does not, then, along the way that every man goes by tradition, ascend the spiritual tower.

Everything which is mentally performed and the commandment of which is fulfilled thus also, is entirely invisible to the eyes of the flesh; whereas every thing which is performed in practice, is wholly of a composite nature. For it is only one commandment that necessitates these two, viz. theory and performance. Because corporeity and non-corporeity and the adap-
5 tation of the two belong to all. Therefore the enlightened intellect — as has been ordered formerly by the blessed Moses — understands in a twofold way the commandment [lying at the bottom of theory and practice]: the simple as well as the complex is understood.

Works performed carefully by the pure, do not remove the impression of the recollection of previous reprehensible things; but they abolish in the mind the painful nature of recollection, so that what has passed through the mind often enough, now becomes something excellent.

The longing of the soul for the acquiring of excellence vanquishes the desire of its partner [2]) for visible things.

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1) Cf. beneath p. 40 and Basilius: Λυσθῆναι δεῖ τὰ δεσμὰ τῆς πρεσβυτέρας τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τὴν ἀληθινὴς τὸ δοῦ ἀκατεύθεται μέλλουσα (Antonius et Maximus, p. 22). And Philo I 380: ἀεμὰ μὲν οὖν πρότερον ἐξέρχεται τὰ πυρέσσοντα τοῦ τοῦτου βίου καιροῦ ἀτενοῦσι, πάντα λύσας . . . πρὸς τὸν τοῦ ἀγενήτου παγκάλων καὶ ἀείμνηστον ἔρον ἀνοχέσθαι. — Plotinus, *Enneades* IV, 8, § 1 points to the Platonic origin of the comparison, and uses it himself § 4, speaking of the soul: ἀντιτραβῶσα δὲ πρὸς νόησιν λύεσθαί τε ἐκ τῶν δεσμῶν, καὶ ἀναβλέπειν . . . .

2) the body

All things have their mean. Lacking that, even those things the use of which is apt to help, may turn aside and become harmful without meeting any obstacle.

If thou wishest to have mental communion with God, by acquiring the impression of that delight that is not subject to the senses, then cling to mercy. For the holy beauty is formed by that element within thee, which resembles mercy [1]. And all the practices of mercy bring the soul, immediately, into communion with the unique splendour of the divine glory [2].

Spiritual unification is a perpetual recollection, that is vivid in the heart without variation, with burning love. By constancy
9 in clinging to the commandments, it acquires the force to remain in union; and there is found, in a way neither secondary nor natural, matter for spiritual vision, in which the soul may confide absolutely. So a man is drawn towards ecstasy by the closing of the two classes of senses: those of the flesh and those of the soul. There is no other way towards spiritual love which is modeller of invisible images, than to begin in the first place with mercy in accordance with the word of our Lord who commands it to those who obey him, in connection with the perfection of the Father, the foundation.

Very different is the word of practice from words of beauty. Even without experience wisdom knows how to adorn its words and to speak the truth even without having any acquaintance with it, and to express itself concerning excellence without any experience of [practical] performance. A word proceeding from practice, is a treasure to confide in. But idle wisdom is a pawn causing shame; it is as when an artist paints water on walls, without being able to quench his thirst by it; or as a man who dreams beautiful dreams.

He who from practical experience speaks about excellence, brings the word to his hearers as it were from the capital won by his own commerce; and, as from the stock of his soul, sows his teachings in the ears of his audience. He opens his mouth freely before his spiritual sons, in the manner of old Jacob before chaste Joseph, [saying]: I have given thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow [3].

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1) Reading ܠܗܘܢ instead of ܠܗ.
2) Cf. Chapter LXXXI.
3) Genesis 48, 22.

10 So every man whose behaviour is stained, will love temporal life; so will also he who falls short of knowledge. Some one has well said: The fear of death distresses a fleshly man. But he who has a good witness in himself, will desire it as life.

Do not reckon as a truly wise man that one whose mind is subject to fear on account of temporal life.

All good and evil things which befall the body have all of them, to be reckoned by thee as dreams, which thou canst escape from not only by death, but which often leave thee even before death and disappear.

If thy soul is bound to some of them, then estimate them as thy possession for ever, accompanying thee also in the world to be. If they are beautiful, then rejoice and thank God in thy mind. If they are evil, then be sorry and sigh and seek to be delivered from them while being in the body. If any good is done to thee, open or concealed, then be sure that thy mediators concerning it have been baptism and faith, by which thou wert called in Jesus Christ unto good works; to whom and to the Father and to the Holy Ghost belong praise, honour and adoration, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

II

11 Gratefulness on the part of the recipient spurs on the giver to bestow gifts larger than before. He who embezzles petty things is also false and fraudulent concerning things of importance.

The sick one who is acquainted with his sickness is easily to be cured; and he who confesses his pain is near to health.

Many are the pains of the hard heart; and when the sick one resists the physician, his torments will be augmented.

There is no sin which cannot be pardoned except that one which lacks repentance, and there is no gift which is not augmented save that which remains without acknowledgement. For the portion of the fool is small in his eyes.

Think constantly of those who are superior to thee in excellence, so thou mayest see thyself at all times as being less than they are. And be aware at all times of the heavy troubles of those whose vexations are difficult and serious, so that thou mayest become grateful for the small ones found with thyself and thou mayest be able to bear them with joy.

When thou art in a state of subjection and languid and dejected, and thou art bound and fettered before thy foe in mournful wretchedness and laborious service of sin, then recall to thy mind the previous times of firmness: how thou shewest painstaking even concerning small things and how thou wert moved with zeal against the obstructors in thy course: how
12 thou utteredst sighs on account of the small things which were despised by thee as accidental and thy whole person was winding a wreath of victory over these things. Then, by these and similar recollections, thy soul will be aroused as from the depth, and be clad with the flame of zeal; and it will rise from its immersion as if from the dead, and stretch itself and return to its former state, in hot strife against Satan and sin.

Recollect the fall of the strong, that thou mayest remain humble under thy virtues. And think of the heavy sins of those who fell and repented; and of the praise and honour they received afterwards, so that thou mayest acquire courage during thy repentance.

Be a persecutor of thy self; then thy foe will be driven away from thee.

Be on peaceful terms with thy soul; then heaven and earth will be on peaceful terms with thee. Be zealous to enter the treasury within thee; then thou wilt see that which is in heaven. For the former and the latter are one, and entering thou wilt see both. The ladder unto the Kingdom is hidden within thee and within thy soul. Dive into thyself [freed] from sin; there thou wilt find steps along which thou canst ascend.

What the things of the world-to-be are, the scriptures do not explain. How we may acquire the faculty to perceive their delight even now, without change of nature or local transition, they teach us plainly.

Though they call these things by beloved names of glorious things which are delightful and esteemed by us, in order to spur us on, still by saying that the eye has not seen, nor
13 the ear heard [1]) and so on, they show us that the things-to-be are not equal to any of the present things, by their being incomprehensible. They have to be reckoned by us as giving us even now spiritual delight, not the enjoyment of those things in themselves, such as are found outside the being of the

1) 1 Cor. 2, 9.

receivers and promised us for the future state. Otherwise "The Kingdom of God is within you"[1]) and "Thy Kingdom come"[2]) would teach us that we possess within us a pledge of the delight which is in those things. For it is necessary that there be a resemblance between these and the pledge, partial for the present though it be, yet to be complete in the future. Again the word "as through a glass"[3]) shows us the comparability anyhow, even if they are not one in essence. If now, according to the trustworthy testimonies of the commentators of the scriptures, this is due to an intelligible influence of the Holy Ghost, and is a part of that total one, then — apart from the spiritual influence that by intelligible apprehension forms a communication between the Holy Ghost and those who are influenced — the delight of the saints in the world is not occasioned by any sensible mediator, be it senses or sense-organs, save only the wombs which contain all in defined order, which we may call the profusion of light, though not the intelligible profusion.

A friend of excellence is not he, who zealously practices beautiful things, but who gladly accepts the evil things adhering to him. Patiently to bear troubles for the sake of excellence, is not so great as this that through the determination of the good will, the mind be not confused by the allurements of exciting things.

For repentance which comes after the taking away of freedom,
14 never can be a source of joy nor can it be reckoned as a redemption of those who rue.

Protect the sinner without doing him wrong. But strengthen his courage for life; then the mercy of the Lord will bear thee[4]).

Support with thy word the weak and the distressed in spirit whenever thou canst; then the hand that bears the universe will support thee. Participate with those who are suffering in heart, in passionate prayer and mourning of the heart; then before thy demand a fountain of grace will be opened.

Be strenuous in prayer at all time before God, with a heart full of chaste deliberations mingled with passion; then He will preserve thy mind from impure thoughts, so that the way of God be not disordered in thee. Occupy thy gaze with constant

1) Luke 17, 21. 2) Matth. 6, 10. 3) 1 Cor. 13, 12.

4) An idea which recurs in the work. Cf. Epictet. *Diatriba*: Lib. I, Cap. XVIII: ὅτι οὐ δεῖ χαλεπαίνειν τοῖς ἁμαρτοκόνοις.

intercourse with intelligent recitation [of the scriptures], lest, on account of idleness, the sight of foreign things defile thy look.

Do not tempt thy mind, for the sake of examination, by consideration of impure seductive thoughts, thinking that thou shalt not be vanquished. Even wise men have been perturbed in this place and deviated. Do not take fire in thy bosom, as hath been said [1]. Without severe bodily trouble, it is hard for the untrained youth to be bound under the yoke of saintliness.

The sign of the beginning of darkness of mind manifests itself in the soul by dejection, in the first place with regard to service and prayer. For it is not possible that the way in thy soul towards error should be opened if thou hast not fallen in
15 this point first. Then, being bereft of God's help — which [else] affords a way unto Him — thou wilt easily fall into the hands of the foes. And further, being without care for the matters of excellence, thou wilt be carried towards the contrary things in every manner. Departing, from any side, is the beginning [of approaching] to the opposite one. Let the service of excellence be firm in thy soul; meditate on it and so on.

Show thy weakness before God at all times, lest strangers come to examine thy strength while thou art separated from thy helper.

The service of the cross is a double one. And this is in accordance with its twofold nature which is divided into two parts: patience in face of bodily troubles, which is accomplished through the instrumentality of the anger of the soul [2]; this is called [3] practice. And: the subtle intellectual service, in intercourse with God, constant prayer and so on, which is performed with the desiring part [2] and called theory. The one purifies the affectable part [2] by the strength of zeal; the other clears the intellectual part [2] by the influence of the love of the soul, which is the natural appetite.

Every one, who, before being trained in the former part, passes to the latter, on account of the pleasures it affords, desiringly [4] — or rather negligently — causes [God's] anger to
16 blow against him because, before having mortified his members

1) Proverbs 6, 27.

2) Cf. *The Book of the Dove*, p. 524/5.

3) The text has ܡܬܩܪܝܐ. Read: ܡܬܩܪܝܐ.

4) We have either to cancel the waw of ܘܐܝܬܝܗܘܢ or to suppose an anakoluth in Isaac's construction; I have cancelled the waw.

on the earth [1]), i. e. before healing the illness of his deliberations by endurance under the labours and the shame of the cross, he has dared to occupy his mind with the glory of the cross. This is what has been said by the ancient saints: If the mind desires to ascend the cross before the senses have become silent on account of weakness, the anger of God will strike it.

By the fact of the ascension of the cross causing anger he does not point to the first part, namely, the bearing of troubles patiently (which is the crucifying of the body) but to the theoretical ascension which is the second part, and which is [truly] subsequent to the healing of the soul. For he who hastens to meditate with his heart vain imaginations concerning future things, while his mind is still stained by reprehensible passions, will be reduced to silence on his way by punishment, because, before having purified his mind by means of the trials met in subduing the carnal desires, on account of what he has heard and read merely, he has hastened headlong to tread a path full of darkness, being blind — a way which exposes to danger day and night even those whose sight is sound and full of light, and who possess Grace as their guide, while their eyes are full of tears, and with prayer and weeping they convert night into day, on account of the danger of the course and the hard rocks they meet, and the phantoms of sham truth that are frequently found on the way among those who pretend to be true. For divine things present themselves spontaneously, without thy perceiving them, if the place of the heart be pure and undefiled.

17 If the small pupil of thy soul has not been purified, do not venture to look at the globe of the sun, lest thou be bereft even of the usual sight, which is simple faith and humbleness and confession of the heart and light service in accordance with thy power [2]), and thou be cast into one of the intelligible places, which is the darkness without God, like him who ventured to go to the meal in sordid habits [3]).

1) Cf. Colossians 3, 5.

2) Faith, confession and work are also the three elements which are enumerated as the constituents of Islam. Cf. Ghazâli, Iḥyâ', I, 109.

3) This sentence occurs also, with slight variations, on p. 50 and 521 sq. In the last passage it shows its sententious character in an evident way, for here the context is not written in the 2nd person. Its sententious character appears also from the fact that it occurs three times in Isaac's book. Indeed it is not Isaac's spiritual property, but a popular sentence in Hellenistic literature. Stobaeus ascribes it to Rhegium and gives it in the following redaction: καλόπερ δὲ τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς οὐκ ἔστι ἱκάνασθαι ἀτενεῖ καὶ ἀδιάστατο τῇ

From labour and watchfulness springs purity of deliberations. And from purity of deliberations inward light[1]. And from here the mind is guided by Grace towards that which it is not allowed to the senses either to teach or to learn.

Let excellence be reckoned by thee as the body, contemplation as the soul. The two [form] one complete spiritual man, composed of sensible and intelligible parts. And as it is not possible that the soul reach existence and birth without the accomplished formation of the body, so it is not possible that contemplation, the second soul, the spirit of revelations, be formed in the womb of the intellect which receives the fulness of spiritual seed, without the corporeal performance of excellence, the dwelling-place of the knowledge which receives revelations.

Contemplation is the apprehension of the divine mysteries which are hidden in the things spoken.

When thou hearest of being far from the world, of leaving the world, of being pure from the world, thou art first in need
18 of learning and knowing — not after the fashion of a novice, but with the impulses of gnosis — what the term world means, how many different meanings the word conveys. Then thou wilt be able thyself to know, in how far thou art distant from or connected with the world. If a man know not first what the world is, he cannot understand with how many limbs he is bound to or far from it.

There are many who think themselves wholly devoid of the world in their behaviour because on two or three points they refrain from it. [This is] because they have not understood nor perceived with discernment that they are dead to the world in one or two limbs, while others are living in the body of the

ὥδει οὕτω καὶ ἐπὶ μᾶλλον τὰν ἀπάθειαν οὐκ ἔστιν ἴδεῖν ἀνέντοι καὶ ἀδυνάτα τᾷ δικαιοῖᾳ. Basilius must also have been acquainted with it: in the collection of sentences by Antonius and Maximus it occurs on his name in this form: εἴδέναι ὀφείλομεν ὅ χρὴ λαλεῖν καὶ ἃ χρὴ σιωπᾶν. οὐ γὰρ πάντα ἐπιτήδεια τοῖς γλώσσης τὰ τοῦ λόγου, ἵνα μὲ ἡ νοῦς παίσῃ ἐξήλαμψε θεῖον τὸν ἥλιον δίκαιον ἀποβλέπειν ἀνελλιπῶς ἃ ἔχει φῶς. But we can even go back to Plotinus (*Enneades* I, 6 § 9): ἐνταῦθα δὲ ἐγὼ ἐπὶ τὸν λόγον ἐλήλυθα καὶ οἱ κινδυνεύοντες ἡ ἀρετὴ ἀνευρεῖν, οἱ δυνάμενοι τὰ πάντα λαμπρὰ βλέπειν, αὐτοὶ βλέποντες, καὶ ἄλλος δικαίᾳ παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίον ἐνοίμενον τῷ γὰρ ὁμοίῳ πρὸς τὸ ὁμοιοῦσθαι συγγενεῖ καὶ ὄμοιον πεφυκόμενον δεῖ ἐπιβάλλειν τῇ δυ. Οὐ γὰρ ἂν ποτὲ εἶδεν ὀφθαλμὸς ἥλιον ἡλιοειδὲς μὴ γεγενημένος αὐτὸ τὸ ἡλίου ἂν ἴδοι δυνηθεὶς μὴ καλὴν γενόμενον. Γενέσθω δὴ πρῶτον θεοειδὴς πᾶς καὶ καλὸς πᾶς εἰ μέλλει θεάσασθαι θεὸν τε καὶ καλόν. Probably, however, Isaac did not borrow the sentence from any of these three authorities, but from the works of Dionysius, where it occurs (*Ecclesiastica Hierarchia*, p. 75) in this form: καὶ μοι μηδεὶς ἀντέλεγτος ἔστι τὸν θεῖον ἴσθω καὶ γὰρ αὐδὲ καὶ ἐλαττόνητος κέγγιος ἐν ἀσθενεῖ κόσμῳ ἀντωπεῖν ἀνεδόμενοι αὐδὲ τοῦς ὑπὲρ ἡμᾶς ἐγχειρεῖν ἐθέλοθες.

1) Literally: the light of the ܢܗܝܪܐ.

world. Therefore they even cannot perceive their affections and because they do not perceive them they are not anxious to be cured from them.

The world is said by speculative examination to be the extension of a common name unto distinct affections. If we wish to call the affections by a common name we call them world; if we mention the affections separately, we call them by their separate names.

The affections are parts of the usual current of the world. Where they have ceased, there the world 's current has ceased. They are: love of riches; gathering of possessions; fatness of the body giving rise to the tendency towards carnal desire; love of honour which is the source of envy; exercising government;
19 pride and haughtiness of magistracy; folly; glory among men, which is the cause of choler, bodily fear.

Where their current has been dammed, there the world, after their example, has to some extent ceased to be maintained and to exist. In the same way as some of the saints, who though being alive, yet are dead; for they are alive bodily, but they do not live carnally. See in which of those thou art alive; then thou shalt know in how many parts thou art living to the world and in how many thou art dead.

When thou hast learned what the world is, thou wilt be instructed in these distinctions and also concerning thy being bound to the world or thy being free from it.

In short: the world is bodily behaviour and carnal thoughts. For the overcoming of the world is also to be recognised in these two: viz. from the change of behaviour and from the alteration of the impulses.

From the impulses of thy mind to the things towards which its impulses go astray, thou canst understand the measure of thy behaviour: viz. to which things thy nature turns without labour; which are the constant inclinations and which are those set into motion fortuitously; whether the mind is the agent for the apprehension of incorporeal impulses only, or whether it works wholly through matter; whether this materiality is an affected state, or whether the impulses are but the stamps of the mind's service to the body, so that the mind, not of its own will, is hallucinating concerning those faculties by which it performs virtues and from which, in a sound state, it derives
20 its motive for fervour and concentration of thought, so that the mind can act corporeally, even with the loftiest aim, be

cause of its lack of experience, even though it be in no affected state; and whether the mind is not distressed by the unseen touch of the stamps of the imaginations, in view of its excessive radiance in God, which is wont to cut off vain recollections.

The short descriptions of this chapter are sufficient for a man's illumination if he be quiet and intelligent; and they outweigh many books.

Bodily fear is strong in man, so strong that it often withholds him from praiseworthy and honourable things. But when it is face to face with psychic fear it is absorbed by it as coldness by the force of a flame.

III

The soul whose nature is not greatly solicitous for the gathering of possessions, does not require great diligence in order to find within itself impulses of wisdom unto God. For freedom from connection with the world will naturally set in motion flashes of intuition from which it can exalt itself unto God and remain in ecstasy.

When the waters from without do not enter the fountain of the soul, its natural waters will arise, viz. the wonderful intuitions which are moving towards God at all time.

21 As often as the soul is found not to be in this state, it has either found a starting point in foreign recollections, or the senses have caused it to be troubled by the touch of [outward] things, when the senses are fenced in by solitude without a break and recollections have grown dim by its helpful influence — then thou wilt see what the nature of the deliberations of the soul, and what the nature of the soul is, and what treasures are collected in it. These treasures are incorporeal intuitions which arise from the soul without care or labour being spent on them. Nay, a man does not even know that such deliberations could arise in human nature, nor does he know who was his teacher, or how he has found that which he cannot describe to his companion, or who has been his guide towards that which he has not learned from another[1]).

1) The passage reminds in a remarkable way of Plotinus' description of the spontaneous character of the illumination. Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*, III, 2, p. 672 describes it thus: ohne Vermittlung und Veranlassung, durch eine göttliche Erleuchtung geht es in der Seele auf, sie kann nicht sagen woher es kommt, ob von innen oder von aussen, ja es kommt streng genommen, gar nicht, sondern es ist unmittelbar da.

This is the nature of the soul. So the affections are additions, entering the soul on account of [certain] causes. But naturally the soul is not affectable [1].

When thou findest psychic or corporeal affections here or there in the scriptures, such things are said concerning those causes. But the soul naturally has no affections.

But the philosophers who are without do not believe this; neither do those who are their followers. But we believe that God has not made His image affectable. With His image I do
22 not mean the body but the soul which is invisible [1]. Every image is a copy in which the prototype is depicted. And a visible image cannot be the copy of something invisible. So we believe that the affections of the soul are not natural as they say. If any one likes to dispute concerning this point we will ask him: What is natural to the soul? To be without affections, full of light, or moved by the affections and dark? Now if the nature of the soul is to be clear and a receptacle of the blessed light, it will be found in this condition when it returns unto its original state. But when it is moved by the affections, all the members of the church confess it to have abandoned its nature. Consequently the affections are later accessions to the nature of the soul. And it is not at all becoming to think the affections to be psychic. If the soul be moved by them, nevertheless it is clear that it is moved by something outside it, not by what is its own. And if these [affections] are thought to be natural, because the soul is moved by them through the intermediary cause of the body, then hunger, thirst and sleep would also be natural to the soul because it is affected and brought to rest by them along with the body. And this would also be true for the amputation of limbs, fever, pains, illnesses and so on, by which the body is affected because of its connection with the soul and the soul because of its connection with the body, being affected with joy because of bodily experiences, and receiving distress, along with the torments of the body.

What is natural to the soul; what is external to and what is above its nature [2].

23 Natural to the soul is the understanding of all created things,

1) Cf. Introduction.

2) This terminology occurs in Stoic writings. Cf. Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*[5], III. 1, p. 264.

sensible and intelligible. Above its nature its being moved by divine contemplation; external to its nature its being excited emotionally by the affections. Also the light of the world, the victorious Basilius, says thus: when the soul is in its natural order, it is found above; When it has abandoned its nature, it is found beneath and on the earth. There are no affections above, where also the place of the soul is said to be. But when its nature abandons its order, it becomes affectable. Where then are the affections of the soul, now that it appears that they do not belong to its nature?

It is clear that the soul is moved by the reprehensible affections which are in the body, as also it is moved by hunger and thirst on account of the body. But because there are no laws concerning these, the soul is not reprehensible on account of them. Just as, sometimes, a man is ordered by God to do those things which are blameworthy and he receives, instead of blame and reprehension, good reward, as Hosea the prophet who contracted an unlawful marriage and as Elijah who committed slaughter in his zeal for God and as those, who on Moses' order, stabbed with swords their kindred.

But it is said that, apart from what belongs to the nature of the body, the soul has also that which belongs to its nature, viz. anger and choler; and these are its passions.

Second question. We ask: when the desire of the soul is kindled to a flame by divine things, does this belong to its
24 nature, or rather when it is set upon earthly and bodily things? And when it is said that the nature of the soul is on fire for the sake of those things which excite its zeal, is then this passion natural when it goes hand in hand with bodily desire, envy, glory and so on, or when it goes in the direction opposite to them? We shall answer the disputed question and we too shall enquire into it.

The holy writ says many things allegorically [1]; and often it uses metaphorical [2] terms. Many times it applies to the soul that which belongs to the body and to the body that which belongs to the soul without distinguishing between the two, for the sake of succinctness. Now the intelligent understand what they read, viz. the aim of scripture. In the things related to the divinity of our Lord for instance, in a high and elevated

1) ܕܠܦܘܬ ܡܕܡ 2) ܐܝܬܝܐ

way, applies to His humanity, that which does not suit human nature and to His divinity what does not suit it. And many who do not understand the aim of the language of scripture have stumbled here so that they never could rise again. — So it is also with the things which concern soul and body.

If excellence is the natural health of the soul, the affections however ailments accustomed to oppress it and to bereave it of its health, it is clear that health is *prior in nature* to accidental illnesses. And if this be so (as it is indeed true) then excellence necessarily must be natural to the soul and the accidental external to its nature. For it is not possible that what is prior should not be natural.

25 Third question. The affections of the body are they naturally inherent in it or of a secundary nature? And those which affect the soul, by the intermediary of the body, are they secondary or natural? To call those of the body not natural, is impossible. As to the soul — because it is known and universally confessed that purity belongs to its nature — no one will venture in view of this fact to maintain that it is primarily affectable; for it is generally conceded that ailment is secondary to health and it is not possible that one and the same things should be a good and an evil nature. One of the two, in any case, must be the prior of the other; and that which is the older one, is also the natural. Whatever is accidental, cannot be said to be natural and essential; but it is an irruption from without. And all accident and obtrusion is connected, whenever it be, with variation and change. Nature, however, does not change or vary.

All [1]) existing affections are given to be a help to each of the natures to which they naturally belong and for the growth of which they were given by God. The bodily affections are placed by God in the body for the sake of profit and growth of the body; and the psychic affections, i. e. the psychic powers, for the sake of the growth and profit of the soul. And when the body is compelled to desist from its affectable nature, by withdrawing from the affections, and to follow the nature of the soul, it is injured. And when the soul leaves its own nature and follows that of the body, it is injured. Because, according to the word of the Apostle, the spirit desires that which harms

1) Cf. Introduction.

the body and the body desires that which harms the spirit[1]. And these two are naturally opposites to one another. Therefore no one shall abuse God because He has implanted in our nature affections and sins. For, when He set in order each nature, He implanted in it that which gives it growth. But if one connects itself with the other, it is no longer in its own domain, but in a foreign one.

If these affections naturally belonged to the soul, why then should the soul be injured when using them? For that which is the property of nature, does not injure it. And how is it, that the accomplishment of the bodily affections is profitable and helpful to the body, whereas those of the soul injure the soul, if they belong to it? And why should, if this be true, excellence torment the body, but be beneficial unto the soul? Thou seest how what is external to their nature injures every one of these natures. For every one of these natures exults when it is near to what is its own. If thou art desirous to know what are the properties of every one of these natures, thou must observe that its properties are those things by the use of which it profits. And if it is tormented by [the use of] any of these things, then know that it is influenced by what is not its property. We conclude: If it is known, that the affections of every one of these natures are each other's opposites, then, consequently, all that gives profit and rest to the body when used by the soul has not to be reckoned as belonging to the soul. Because what is natural to the soul is fatal to the body, except those things which are connected with the soul in some secondary way. Because of the weakness of the flesh the soul can absolutely not be freed from them, as long as it is clad with the flesh. For its nature is connected with the troubles of the flesh because of the union of its impulses with the carnal senses, with which they are interwoven by the inscrutable wisdom. And, though intermingled in this way, nevertheless impulses are distinguished from impulses, and will from will, viz. the carnal from the spiritual one. And nature is not at all composite nor does it disavow what is its property. And though man renders the impulses in a high degree equal to each other, by sin or by excellence, at certain times every one exerts its will and shows its power.

1) Cf. Galatians 5, 17.

But when bodily thoughts have to some extent been lifted up, then their impulses manifest themselves wholly in the spiritual sphere, swimming in the heart of heaven with incomprehensible things. But even then the body cannot remain without some memory of what its own is, even as, when the impulses are in the domain of sin, the beautiful emotions of the soul are not brought to silence in the mind.

What is purity of mind? Not that one who does not know evil things, is pure of mind — that were to be a brute. Nor do we call pure of mind those whom nature has placed in the age of boyhood; that were to postulate that man should not belong to the class of created beings. But purity of mind consists in being captivated by divine things, [a state] that is only reached when many virtues have been practised.

We do not venture to say that he that has reached it, has acquired it without the experience of contrary deliberations. Else he would not be clad with a body. For we do not think
28 that before the world-to-be nature can be purged from contrary [inclinations]. The temptation of the deliberations is not, in my opinion this, that one surrenders to them, but the beginning of the struggle within the deliberations which begins in the mind on account of the four kinds of bases which are the root of movement to all kinds of affections. So that in this life there is not found anyone exalted above earthly recollections, even if he belong to the masters of the battle and, like Paul, be reputed perfect.

But while the body by means of its impulses, in accordance with the order of nature, and the world by its natures through the intermediation of the senses, and the soul by deliberations, recollections and powers of deviation, and the demons by the co-operating forces of the things mentioned — while [1] the power of these fourfold affections is experienced by him [2], he will be troubled to a small degree only [3] and be drawn towards the excellent things which are seen by intuition. Decide thou, whether it is possible that one of these four be annihilated before the annihilation of the world, or by the transition that takes places at death; or whether the body can elevate itself wholly above its needs, without nature's urging it to seek any

1) I have retained the anakoluthic character of the original.
2) The mystic.
3) Other Men: he will perceive this to a small extent only.

of the worldly things. If now this is deemed absurd, so long as these [four powers] exist, it is necessary that also the affections move themselves in all beings clad with a body, and consequently caution must be practised by every one. By the affections I do not understand one or two, but all the different ones which [occur in] those clad with flesh. But if a man should venture [to say that he experiences only] weak impulses and harmless strife, we would say that, whoever such people may be, they do not require works but great watchfulness.

What is the difference between purity of mind[1]) and purity of heart.

Purity of mind is something other than purity of heart, just as there is a difference between one of the members of the whole body and the whole body. The mind is one of the senses of the soul. The heart is the central organ[2]) of the inward senses; this means the sense of senses, because it is the root[3]). And if the root is holy, so also are all the branches. But this is not so if it is holy in one of the branches only. Now with but little acquaintance with the scriptures and a little exercise in fasting and solitude, the mind forgets its former occupation and is cleansed, while it refrains from foreign habits. But is also easily defiled.

The heart is purified through great trouble and by being deprived of all association with the world, together with a complete mortification in every point. And when it has been purified, its purity is not defiled by the touch of insignificant [worldly] things; this means: it has no fear even before severe struggles. For it possesses a sound stomach that easily digests all sorts of food which are difficult for others who are sick in their interior. For the physicians say: All meat which is difficult of digestion, increases the forces of the sound body, because it is taken up by a strong stomach. In the same way every purification that is brought about easily, in a short time and by small labours, is easily defiled again. But the purity that is acquired through great troubles and after a long time by the highest part of the soul, is not endangered by insignificant touches of the [worldly] things.

Quiet senses give birth to peace in the soul, because they do not allow it to experience strife. But since the soul has no

1) ܪܥܝܢܐ 2) ܐܣܝܪ 3) Cf. Introduction.

sensation of any thing, it is a victory without struggle. But when it becomes negligent, it is not able to remain steadfast, and when it strives to ged rid of apprehension after the latter has got accession, the soul destroys its previous properties, viz. serenity and natural perfection. For the majority of men, and possibly the whole world, leave their first state on account of this cause [1]). Only one out of many returns to his first place when he has once adopted the second habit. Much better is simplicity than the different kinds of forgiveness.

Human nature needs fear in order to guard against the borders of the commandments being crossed, [it needs] love to excite the desire of good things, for the sake of which man hastens to perform beautiful things.

Spiritual knowledge is posterior to the performance of excellence. Prior to both are love and fear. And fear is prior to love. Every one who ventures to acquire the latter things before the former, undoubtedly lays a perishable foundation in his soul. For they are placed by God in such an order, that these proceed from those. Do not interchange the love of thy neighbour with the love of [worldly] things, for that which is precious above all things, is hidden in it.

31 A material object which is a mark for the eyes of the flesh, is also of such a nature as to affect the hidden visual powers; and the affections which cloud the second natural contemplation, acts in the same manner for the natural steadfastness. They are related to one another in the same way, up to where ceases the current of all kinds of contemplation. When the mind [2]) is in a state of natural steadfastness, it is in angelic contemplation, which is the first and natural contemplation which is also named naked mind. When the mind is in the second state of natural knowledge, it sucks and is sustained by the milk from the corporeal breasts; this state is called the last garment of the afore-mentioned state; it is placed after [the state of] purity, which the mind enters first. It is prior in being, for it is the first stage of knowledge, although posterior in honour. On this account, therefore, it is also called the second one, as also on account of the indications of some of the tokens by which the mind is purified and trained for the ascent to a second order, which is the perfection of the intel-

1) Negligence. 2) ܪܥܝܢ

lectual impulses, and the stage which is near divine contemplation [1].

The last garment of the mind are the senses. Its state of nakedness is its being moved by kinds of non-material contemplation. Leave the small things in order to find the honoured ones.

Be dead in life, then thou wilt not live in death. Let thyself die in integrity, but not live in guiltiness [2]. Not only those who suffer death for the sake of the faith in Christ are martyrs, but also those who die for the sake of keeping his commandments.

52 Be not inept in thy petitions, lest thou grieve God by thy ignorance.

Learn to pray with prudence, that thou mayest be esteemed worthy of glorious things.

Seek well-esteemed things from Him, who does not withhold; then thou wilt receive honour from Him, because of the choice of thy wise will.

Solomon sought wisdom and he received, apart from it, the earthly kingdom, because he knew how to ask wisely viz. great things from the King.

Elisha sought one or two parts of the spirit that was upon his master and his request was not withheld from him.

The honour of the King is lessened by him who seeks contemptible things.

Israel sought despicable things; it gained the anger of God. It neglected to wonder at the workings and terrible effects of His deeds and it sought the desires of its belly. And while their food was still in their mouth, the anger of God reached them. Present thy requests unto God in accordance with His glorious being, in order that thy honour be great in His eyes and He rejoice in thee.

When a man seeks from a king a measure full of dung he will not only be despised on account of his despicable request,

1) The above passage betrays its relation with Philonean thought at once by the term "naked mind" which often occurs in Philo (I 76 sq., 98, 179, 270). There is further concordance, but also difference between the two authors. Both of them distinguishes three kinds of nakedness. According to Philo they are: the puerile state, the state of natural purity, and the purified state. According to Philo (I 76 sq.) they are: the puerile state; the state of Noah's drunkenness in which the soul has lost its faculties; the state of purity in which the soul has abandoned all earthly things.

2) Cf. Porphyrius, *Sententiae*, IX: ὁ γοῦν δίκαιος ἀποθνῄσκει ἐὰν μὴ συνεγυμνάσθαι δύνηται τοῦ σώματος ἀπὸ ψυχῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τοῦ ἀδικοῦντος. ἀναγκαῖον γὰρ ψυχῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος. And the Pythagorean sentence in Stobaeus (p. 158): τελεῖται καλῶς κοίτου ἐὰν δι' ἀκρασίαν τὴν ψυχὴν ἀκυκήσῃ.

exposing thus his ignorance, but he also insults the king by his insipid demand: such also is he who in prayer asks corporeal things from God.

Lo, the angels and the archangels which are the chiefs of the angels look at thee in the time of prayer, [in order to know] which prayer thou wilt present unto their Lord. And they wonder at thee when they see the corporeal one leaving his dunghill and asking heavenly things.

35 Do not seek from God that which He is anxious to give us even if we do not beg for it, which He withholds not from his housemates and not even from those who are wholly foreign to the knowledge of Him, nay who do not even know that He is.

Use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do [1]). What is this "as the heathen"? The corporeal things are sought by the peoples of the earth; but give ye no thought saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink or wherewithall shall we be clothed? For your Father knoweth that ye also have need of all these things [2]).

A son does not ask bread from his father, but makes supplication concerning the great portions in store for him in the house of his father. That which our Lord has commanded concerning daily bread, namely that we pray for it, is a petition which he handed down to the common people, because of the weakness of their minds. Regard that which he commands to those who are perfect in knowledge and sound of soul, viz.: ye shall not take thought of food or raiment. If your Father bestows care upon the fowls that have no soul, how much more upon you. But ask from God the Kingdom and righteousness, then he will add these things too.

If He is slow in granting thy request, when thou askest without receiving promptly, then be not distressed. For thou art not wiser than God. When thou remainest as thou art [3]), [it is] either because thy behaviour does not agree with thy request; or because the ways of thy heart diverge from the aim of thy prayer; or because thy inner state is childish in comparison with the greatness of the thing.

It is not becoming that great things should fall into our 34 hands easily; lest the gift of God should be thought to be mean because of its being acquired without difficulty.

1) Matthew 6, 7. 2) Matthew 6, 31 sq. 3) The prayer not being heard.

All that is acquired with labour, is guarded with caution.

Thirst after Jesus; then he will satisfy thee with his love. Shut thy eyes to the precious things of the world; then thou wilt be deemed worthy of a peace given by God to reign in thy heart.

Restrain thyself from the allurements that are shining for the eyes; then thou wilt be deemed worthy of spiritual joy.

If thy behaviour is not worthy of God, do not ask from Him praised things, lest thou appear as a man who tries God.

Prayer accords strictly with behaviour.

No man desires heavenly things as long as he is bound with ties [impeding] his will, on account of the body. And no man asks divine things while he is occupied with earthly things. The desire of every man is known from his works; and that which he cares for, he will be anxious to seek in prayer. And he will be zealous in showing by his outward deeds that which he asks for in his prayer.

He who desires great things, has no intercourse with mean ones.

Be free even while thou art bound in the body and show submission in thy freedom for the sake of Christ; and be wise in thy innocence, lest thou be beguiled.

Love humility in thy dealings, that thou mayest be freed from the imperceivable snares which are continually to be found by the side of the paths on which the humble walk.

Do not reject the troubles, by means of which thou art led towards knowledge.

Do not fear temptations by means of which thou wilt find precious things.

35 Pray that thou mayest not be led into temptations of the soul. To those of the body thou shalt prepare thyself with all thy force and with all thy limbs thou shalt swim in them. For without them it is impossible for thee to approach unto God. For beyond them lies divine rest.

Who flees from temptations, flees from excellence; not from the temptations of desires, but from [those of] troubles.

How does the sentence "pray, that ye enter not into temptation" [1]) concord with "strive to enter in at the strait gate" [2]) and "fear not them which kill the body" [3]) and "he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it"? [4])

1) Matthew 26, 41. 2) Luke 13, 24. 3) Matthew 10, 28. 4) Matthew 10, 39.

In all these places our Lord recommends to us temptations; but in that he orders us to pray that we enter not into temptation. What kind of excellence can be accomplished without temptations? Or what kind of temptation is stronger than the which he orders us to undergo for His sake? And "he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me" [1]. "Pray that ye enter not into temptation", but entering into temptations occurs everywhere in his teachings. And he has said: without temptations the Kingdom of heaven is not found.

O how strait is the way of thy teachings, our Lord! And he who does not discriminate with knowledge, as he reads, will always remain without it, as far as his insight is concerned.

When the sons of Zebedee and their mother desired of him to sit with him in the Kingdom, he postulated this: Are ye able to suffer gladly the cup of temptations? Are ye able to
30 drink of the cup that I shall drink of and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with [2]? And how orderest Thou here, O our Lord: pray that ye enter not?

Which are the temptations into which we shall pray not to enter.

Pray that thou enterest not into temptation concerning thy belief.

Pray that thou enterest not into temptation through mental presumtion, with the demon of abuse and haughtiness.

Pray that thou enterest not, under [God's] admission, into the manifest temptations of the senses, which Satan is able to instill unto thee with God's permission, on account of the foolish thoughts thou hast cherished.

Pray that the witness of chastity be not taken away from thee lest thou be tempted in the flames of sin without him.

Pray that thou enterest not into the temptation of abusing anything.

Pray therefore, that thou enterest not into psychic temptations, namely those which lead the soul into struggle, doubt and allurements. But prepare for the bodily ones with thy whole body and swim in them with all thy limbs, thy eyes full of tears, that thou be found amidst of them with thy guardian. For without temptations God's care cannot be perceived and familiarity of speech with Him cannot be acquired and

1) Matthew 10, 38. 2) Matthew 20, 22.

spiritual wisdom cannot be learnt and the love of God cannot be implanted in the soul.

Before [having experienced] temptations, man prays unto God as a stranger. But when he has entered into troubles for the sake of his love, without being changed, then, as one that has laid upon God [the obligation of paying] a certain loan, he is reckoned as His housemate and His friend, who has fought, for the sake of His will, against the host of His enemies. This
37 is [the meaning of]: Pray that ye enter not into temptation.

And further: pray that thou enterest not into temptations for the sake of thy self-exaltation, but for the sake of thy love of God, that His power may be conspicuous in thee. Pray that thou enterest not into such on account of the folly of thy thoughts and deeds, but in order that thou provest to be a friend of God and His power be glorified in thy endurance.

On the mercy of our Lord in this matter, who measures his word in accordance with human weakness.

Further he deals [with us] in this matter compassionately. If thou considerest bodily things [it appears that God], also in this point has remembered the weakness of nature: it was possible that, on account of the wretchedness of the body, we should not find fortitude against the power of the temptations whenever it should present itself, and consequently we should even leave [the path of] truth, being overcome by troubles. Therefore he orders us that, as much as possible, we should avoid entering wilfully into temptation. And not only this, but [he even says]: Pray that you be not found in it without just cause, if it be possible to please God without temptation.

But if very great excellence is desired, when temptations assail and that most terribly, and if that excellence cannot be accomplished without a man's bearing them, in that case it is not becoming to spare ourselves or anyone. Even on account of fear thou shalt not shrink from that great thing upon which the life of thy soul depends, putting forward as an apology
38 for thy laxness: Pray that ye enter not into temptation. For such are those, concerning whom it is said that they sin secretly by [fulfilling] the commandments.

If one of the divine commandments comes to be dissociated from a man, be it the state of chastity, or the habit of holiness, or the confession of faith, or the testimony concerning the word

of God, or the cautiously guarding of the other prescriptions of the Law — it is impossible that he should not fall if he be afraid of temptations. Therefore he has to despise the body with complete confidence, and to entrust God with its soul and to proceed in the name of the Lord. And He that was with Joseph in the land of Egypt and who was the witness of his chastity, and who was with Daniel in the pit of lions, and with Hananja and his companions in the furnace, and with Jeremia in the pit of mire and who saved him and made him an object of compassion in the midst of the camp of the Chaldaeans; who was with Peter in the prison and brought him out of it through shut gates; and with Paul in the synagogues of the Jews; in short, He who in all generations was with His servants always and everywhere and showed in them His power and made them victorious and guarded them miraculously so that they saw His salvation manifestly at the time of their troubles, He will strengthen and guard him in the midst of the storms which surround him. Therefore he shall arm himself against the invisible foe and his hosts with the zeal of the Maccabees and of the other holy prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and recluses who have maintained the divine laws and the spiritual commandments in frightful places and among difficult and fearful temptations and who have thrown the world and the body behind them and clung to the truth in them without giving way to the constraint pressing both body and soul and endured as heroes; in short, whose names are written in the book of life until the coming of our Lord. And their deeds are preserved in the book by God's decree for our instruction and encouragement according to the testimony of the blessed Apostle, so that we may get insight from them and learn the way of God, placing their stories before our mental eyes as living images, that we may resemble them and conform the ways of our behaviour unto theirs, after the pattern of the Ancients.

To the soul endowed with mind the words of God are delightful as oily food which makes fat the body, to the palate of those who are healthy.

The stories of the just are as desirable to the ear of the perfect, as a constant watering to young plantations.

Listening to God's providential leading of the Ancients be estimated by them as precious drugs for weak eyes. And let

the recollection of it be kept with thee at all times of the day. Meditate and think of it and learn wisdom from it, that thou be able to receive in thy soul with honour the recollection of God's greatness and find for thyself everlasting life in Jesus Christ, the mediator of God and mankind, who was one in his two natures. Though the legions of the angels are not able to look upon the glory surrounding His majestic throne, yet for thy sake He has appeared before the world the most contemptible and humble of man; without form or comeliness;
40 and while His invisible nature was not within the reach of the apprehension of created beings, He accomplished His providential dealings by [covering Himself] with a veil [made of the stuff] of our limbs, in order to save the life of all.

This is he through whom He has purified many peoples [1]) and on whom the Lord has laid the sin of us all [2]), as Jesaja says. It pleased the Lord to humble him and to put him to grief [3]).

Sin has been placed in him who knew no sin [4]). To whom, for his providential dealings in all generations for our sake, be glory and praise and thanksgiving and adoration from all, now and at all time and for ever and ever. Amen.

IV

The soul that loves God [finds] its rest in God only.

First detach from thyself the outward bonds, then strive to bind thy heart to God.

To be detached from matter is prior to being bound to God [5]).

When a child has been weaned, bread is given him as food. And a man who wishes to become excellent in God, has first to wean himself from the world, as a child is weaned from his mother's breasts.

Bodily labours are prior to psychic service, as the creation of the body takes place before that of the soul.

For he who does not perform bodily labour, does not per-
41 form psychic labours either. For the latter are born out of the former as the ears from mere grains. And he who does not perform psychic service, is also devoid of spiritual gifts.

1) Jesaja 52, 15 in the Peshitta. 2) Jes. 53, 6. 3) Jes. 53, 10.
4) 2 Cor. 5, 21. 5) The sentence occurs also p. 7. Cf. Introduction.

Temporary suffering for the sake of the truth is not to be compared with the delight preserved for those who perform labours of excellence.

As the weeping of the time of sowing is followed by the joys of harvest [1]), so are the labours for the sake of God followed by joy.

The bread earned with sweat, delights the workman; labours for the sake of righteousness, the heart that has received the knowledge of Christ.

Suffer contempt and [2]) humiliation in the thought of excellence, for the sake of the heart's familiarity of speech with God. Every time a man suffers a hard word with discernment, save only when it is caused by his own fault, he receives a crown of thorns on his head for the sake of Christ; blessed is he! At other times he is crowned and knows it not.

He who flees from the fame [that rests] on knowledge, will perceive in himself the hope of the world to come.

He who promises to leave the world, yet quarrels with men concerning [worldly] things because he is not willing to give up anything of what is agreeable unto him, he is perfectly blind, because he has given up the whole world voluntarily, yet quarrels about a part of it.

If anyone flees from what is agreeable [unto him] in this world, his mind will behold the world to come.

He who is master of possessions, is the slave of passions. Do not estimate gold and silver only as possessions, but all things thou possessest for the sake of the desire of thy will.

He who cuts off impediments from fear of affections, he is a wise man indeed.

Without the constant service of excellence true knowledge
42 cannot be found.

Not by bodily works alone is the knowledge of life acquired, but by directing our efforts to the cutting off of mental affections.

He who labours without discernment will easily become the victim of the causes of sin when they present themselves to him. Never praise him who labours with his body, but concerning his senses is lax and without constraint, viz. whose ears and mouth are open and whose eyes are prone to wander.

1) Literally: full hands. Cf. Ps. 126, 6. 2) Reading of London Ms. 14634.

If thou settest up as thy aim to practice mercy, train thyself not to pursue justice in other fields, lest thou appear to work with one hand and to spill with the other. For there clemency is necessary, but here magnanimity.

Let the forgiveness of those who are guilty towards thee in these things, be reckoned by thee as a work of righteousness. Then thou wilt see peace springing up in thy soul from both sides, that is when thy path is superior to dignity and justice, and thou wilt favour the rise of freedom in all things. For one of the saints, speaking of these things, says: The merciful, if he be not just, is blind, in so far as he provides others from wealth which has been gathered with justice and by his own labours, and not from the acquirements of falsehood, oppression, iniquity and cunning.

In the same way, in another place, this man preaches: If thou sowest among the poor, sow from thy own possessions; what thou sowest from those of others is much more bitter than weeds. But I say: if the merciful be not even above justice, he is not merciful. This means, that he will not only show mercy unto men on his own part, but that he will voluntarily suffer iniquity with delight, so that he does not maintain and postulate full justice in his dealings with his fellow men, but is merciful towards him and surpassing justice by mercy, wreathing for himself the crown not of the just under the law, but of the perfect under the new covenant.

To give the poor from one's own possessions, and to cover the naked on seeing them, to love the neighbour as one self, not to do iniquity or falsehood, are things commanded also by the old law. But perfection in behaviour, according to the new covenant, commands thus: If a man takes from thee, do not demand back; give every one who asks from thee. And not only hast thou to suffer gladly iniquitous dealing in possessions and other outward things, but thou hast even to give thyself in behalf of thy neighbour.

Merciful is he, who shows his compassion towards his neighbour not only in gifts, but who after hearing or seeing anything that causes suffering to any one, cannot withhold his heart from burning; who, even if he receives a blow on his cheek from his brother, does not venture to repay him even with a word and so cause him to suffer intellectually.

Honour the works of vigils, then thou wilt find consolation

near in thy self. Be constantly occupied with recitation in solitude, then thou wilt be drawn towards ecstasy at all times.

44 Love poverty with endurance, that thy mind may be concentrated and so not wander.

Hate abundance, that thou be preserved against confusion of mind.

Cut off intercourse with| the multitude and take care of thy behaviour that thy soul be saved from spilling its inward rest.

Love chastity lest thou be put to shame at the time of prayer before Him who exposes thee to strife.

Acquire a pure behaviour, that thy soul may exult during prayer and joy be kindled in thy mind at the recollection of death.

Keep control of small things, lest thou neglect great ones.

Be not lazy with regard to labours lest thou be put to shame when in presence of all comrades.

Pursue thy work with knowledge, lest it throw thee out of thy whole course.

Be not destitute of provisions; lest |thy companions| leave thee alone in the midst of the way and depart.

Acquire freedom in thy behaviour, that thou be freed from confusion.

Do not use thy freedom for the sake of comfort, lest thou become a slave of slaves.

Love abstinence in thy behaviour, that the deliberations leading to haughtiness of heart and lasciviousness may be restrained.

That he who loves finery should acquire a humble mind, is not possible. For the heart within and the habits without necessarily must be parallel one to another. Who would be able to acquire chastity of mind, when he is addicted to luxuriance? And who could acquire humble inward deliberations, when he is pursuing outward glory? And who is he, that being lascivious without and lax in his limbs, should be chaste in his
45 heart and pious in his deliberations? When the mind is guided by the senses, it feeds with them upon the food of the beasts: but when the senses are guided by the mind, they feed with it upon the sustenance of the angels.

Vain glory is a servant to fornication. If it is concerned with behaviour, to haughtiness. To humility brevity is proper.

Love of glory is connected with prolixity. The former through

constant concentration, attains to contemplation and arms the soul unto chastity. The latter through the continual wandering of the mind, gathers provisions[1]) through contact with [outward] things, and defiles the heart.

It touches lasciviously upon the nature of things and excites the mind through lascivious deliberations. The former is spiritually concentrated by contemplation and moves its possessors towards glory.

Compare not all powers and signs that are worked in the whole world, with a man's consciously sitting in solitude.

Love the ease of solitude rather than satisfying the hunger of the world and the converting of the multitude of heathen peoples from error unto adoring God. Let it be more excellent in thy eyes to detach thyself from the bonds of sin, than to detach the subdued unto liberty from those who subject their bodies.

Prefer to make peace with thyself, in harmony with the trinity within thee: body, soul and spirit, rather than to appease those who are angry at thy teachings.

Love simplicity of speech together with experienced know-
46 ledge within, rather than the production of a Gihon of teachings by acuteness of mind and out of a deposit of hear-say and ink.

Be anxious to quicken the deadness of thy soul caused by affections, unto the emotion of the impulses in God, rather than to quicken those who are dead in the natural sense.

There have been many people who have exercised powers, quickened the dead, bestowed their labour upon the erring, done great signs and drawn many people towards God by exciting their admiration of the things done by them; but afterwards those who have saved others, have fallen into impure and disreputable passions. And after they had given life to others, they have brought themselves to death and caused themselves to stumble by the offence given by their works. The cause of this is, that, while they were still sick of soul, they did not care for their own healing, but plunged themselves into the sea of the world in order to heal the souls of others, being still sick themselves. So they have bereft themselves of the hope in God as I said before, because the weakness of their senses was not yet able to bear the touch of the rays

1) The London Ms. has ܐܣܪ̈ܐ "bonds".

of [worldly] things that excite usually the vehemence of the affections in those who still are in want of caution. I mean the sight of women and comfort and money and worldly things, and the passion for governing and for exalting oneself above others.

Be despised by fools for simplicity, not by the wise for audacity. Seek poverty for humility's sake and do not seek riches
47 for the sake of audaciousness. Confound critics by the power of thy virtues, not by thy word; and the impudence of those who will not be persuaded, by the peacefulness of thy lips, not by sounds. Confound the lascivious by thy honourable behaviour and those of audacious sensuality by the chastity of thy eyeballs that are concentrated within thee in quiet.

Deem thyself a stranger wherever thou enterest all thy lifelong [1]), that thou mayest be able to flee from the great damages rising from freedom of speech.

Think concerning thyself always that thou knowest nothing, that thou mayest be liberated from the reprehensible things caused in thee by conceit; then thou wilt be entitled to direct others.

Let thy mouth constantly administer blessing; then the scorn of any one will never hurt thee. Disdain gives birth to disdain, blessing to blessing.

Think concerning thyself always that thou needest teaching, in order that thou be found a wise man during thy whole life.

Do not hand down to others as thy own, the practical ethics [2]) that thou hast not yet reached; lest thou be put to shame by thyself and thy deception appear from the comparison with thy behaviour. But if thou speakest concerning what is becoming, speak as one belonging to the class of pupils, not as an authority, having before subdued thy self and shown thyself as being less than thy listener. Then thou wilt give also thy hearers an example of humility and thy words will spur them unto the course towards [good] works and thou wilt be honoured in their eyes.

48 As much as is possible for thee, speak about such things with tears, so that it be profitable unto thyself and thy companions and attract grace towards thee.

1) Bukhārī, *Kṛḥāḥ*, b. 3: Be in the world as a stranger (كن في الدنيا كأنك غريب). And according to Porphyrius man in this world is a stranger, who longs for home (Zeller, *Phil. d. Griechen*[4] III, 2, p. 718). Cf. Hebrews 11, 13 etc.

2) See beneath p. 40, note 1.

If, by the grace of Christ, thou hast reached the delight of the mysteries of the visible created things, which is the first summit of knowledge, then arm thy soul against the spirit of slander. For without arms thou canst not hold thy place in this country, but thou wouldst soon be killed secretly by the seducers. Let thy arms be: fasting and tears which thou shedst in constant self-humiliation; and prudence against reading books which accentuate the differences between the confessions, with the aim of causing schisms, which provides the spirit of slander with a mighty weapon against the soul.

When thy stomach is replenished, do not venture to scrutinize, or thou willst regret it. Understand what I say: in a full stomach, there is no knowledge of the mysteries of God. Be occupied with the books of God's providence intensely, without becoming satisfied. They have been composed by holy men and show the aim of His different works in His establishing the different natures [1]) of the world. Let thy mind be strengthened by them and thou wilt acquire enlightened impulses from their subtlety; then thy mind will go its way with a clear consciousness towards the aim of [understanding] the right scheme of the creation of the world, according to the laudable wise intention of the Creator of the natures.

Read in the two Testaments which God has destined for the instruction of the whole world, so that it should be dazzled by the power of His Providence in every generation and be enveloped in wonder.

Such recitations and the like are very useful to this aim. Let thy recitation take place in complete rest, while thou art free from too great care for the body and from the disturbance of practice; then the recitation will give thy soul a delicious taste, by the sweet insight, exalted above the senses, which the soul, by constant intercourse with it, perceives in itself. Do not deem the words that are founded upon experience as the babbling of those who sell words, lest thou remain in darkness till the end of thy life, bereft of their profit, groping in the night in times of war, nay even falling into one of the pits, under the pretext of [clinging to] truth.

This shall be the sign for thee, when thou art near to enter that country: when grace begins to open thy eyes so that they

1) Isaac uses the word "nature" (جنس) in a sense corresponding with our "species".

perceive things by essential sight, at that time thy eyes will begin to shed tears till they wash thy cheeks even by their multitude, and the vehemence of the senses will be calmed so that they will be shut up within thee peacefully. If any man teach thee otherwise, do not believe him. To ask from the body anything else — as a manifest sign of the real apperception — than tears, is not allowed to thee, save only if the influence of the members of the body be silent. This takes place when the mind is elevated above [earthly] beings and the body is without tears, apprehension and emotionality, except only its natural animal existence. For this knowledge does not stoop to take with it as secondary companions of spiritual sight the
50 ideas of the things of the sensual world. "Whether in the body or out of it, I do not know". It is God who knows this as well as the fact that he has heard unutterable words [1]).

All that is heard by the ears can be spoken. But he did not hear sensible sounds, nor did he [see] in a vision of corporeal sensible images, but with the impulses of the mind, in a state of rapture apart from the body, the will having no part in it [2]). The eye never saw the like, the ear never heard its equal and his varied knowledge never dreamt of recollecting the likeness of what his heart saw, namely that which God has in store to show the pure in heart when they have become dead to the world: not corporeal sight received through the eyes of the flesh in gross distinctions, nor fantasies which they themselves form in their mind, in a secondary way, but simplicity of contemplation concerning things of intellect and faith — the contrary of partition and division — that show the images of the elements.

Fix thy gaze on the sphere of the sun according to thy visual strength and only with the object of enjoying its rays, not with the aim of scrutinizing the course of its wheel, lest even thy limited sight be taken from thee [3]). If thou find honey, eat in measure lest thou, having become satisfied, hast to reject it. The nature of the soul is of small dimensions; and sometimes it proceeds onwards, desiring to learn what is beyond its nature. And many times, during the course of recitation and
51 the contemplation of things, it grasps one or more things: yet the sum of its knowledge is insignificant as compared with

1) 1 Cor. 12, 2—4. 2) Cf. above p. 13 note 1. 3) Cf. p. 17.

what it found. But how far does its knowledge penetrate? Until its deliberations are clad with emotion and trembling. Then it hastens to turn backwards from fear, venturing [from time to time] to penetrate into the luminous things.

But fear withholds it on account of the frightfulness of these things. And discernment warns in silence the mind of the soul not to be audacious lest it should die. What is too hard for thee, seek not; what is too strong for thee, search not. Scrutinize with thy intellect that which has been allowed to thee, and do not venture to approach unto hidden things. Adore therefore and praise in silence and confess thy inability to understand. For too much for thee has been shown to thee, but do not trouble thyself with the rest of His works. As it is not good to eat much honey, so it is not good to examine laudable words. Lest, desiring to gaze from a great distance before we have approached near, we be exhausted by the interminable way, without having the power to gaze, and be injured.

For sometimes in stead of truth fantasies arise; when namely the intellect becomes too weary to understand, and forgets its true essence. And the wise Solomon has well said that he that hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city that is in ruins and without walls [1].

It is not necessary to search for God in heaven and earth and to send out our mind to seek Him in different places.
52 Purify thy soul, o man, and strip thyself from the thought of recollections which are unnatural and hang before thy impulses the curtain of chastity and humility. Thereby thou wilt find Him that is within thee. For to the humble the mysteries are revealed.

If thou wouldst give thyself to the service of the pure prayer of the mind and to constant vigils in order to acquire a mind clad with light, withdraw thyself from the sight of the world, and cut off intercourse by speech. And refuse to receive in thy cell thy accustomed friend, even [if he comes] for the sake of excellence, save only him that has the same aim as thyself and shares in the secrets of thy behaviour. If thou art in fear of distraction and secret psychic intercourse, which originates spontaneously without our seeking it, cut off from thee even outward intercourse.

1) Proverbs 25, 28.

Let thy prayers be followed by works of excellence, that thy soul may see the flower of the light of truth. In consequence of the heart's freedom from external recollections, the mind will receive [the gift] of ecstatic understanding of things. The soul can easily be accustomed to interchange one occupation with another if we only bestow some little care and trouble upon it.

Burden it with the labour of reading books expounding the narrow ways of behaviour, contemplation, and the stories of the saints, even if it does not perceive delight in the beginning, because of the darkness and disturbance originating in present recollections; then it will interchange one habit with another.

53 Accordingly when thou risest for prayer and service, instead of meditating worldly things, scriptural thoughts will be pictured in the mind. And thereby the recollection of that which it saw and heard before, will be forgotten and effaced in it. So thy mind will reach purity. This is what has been said: the mind is made chaste by recitation when it comes to prayer, and by recitation it is enlightened during prayer. This means: the soul will find strength to interchange outward distraction with the habits of prayer, viz. essential understanding shining in the mind on account of the wondrous recollections of that world. How often at those times has the power of contemplation [stimulated] by the scriptures, made silent and stupefied [the solitary] during prayer and left him standing without impulses; the same power, that cuts off prayer by delight as I have said, giving rest to the heart and bringing to silence its impulses, the psychic and bodily members being in rest.

Those know what I say, who have experienced this in their soul, who have penetrated into its mysteries, who have not learnt it from others or snatched it from writings which so often are found to falsify truth.

A full stomach shrinks from examining spiritual questions, as a harlot from speaking of chastity. A conscience full of disease abhors fat food; a mind full of the world, cannot approach the investigation of divine service.

54 Fire cannot burn fresh wood; the love of God cannot be kindled in a heart that loves comfort.

A harlot cannot cling to the love of one man; neither can the soul, that is tied to many things, cling to loving spiritual teachings.

As he who has never seen the sun with his eyes is not able, on the basis of hearing about it, to imagine its light in his mind, or to receive some image in his soul, or to perceive the beauty of its rays, so he who in his soul does not have perception for the taste of spiritual service and whose behaviour has never brought him experience of its mysteries so that he is able to conceive in his mind an image resembling the truth, is unable to find real conviction in his soul nor to attain the essence of the matter through human teachings and training in writings [1]).

If thou possessest anything above thy daily sustenance, go and give it the poor and then offer unto God prayer with frankness. This means: speak with God as a son with his father.

There is nothing which brings the heart so near unto God as mercy [2]); and nothing which gives peace to the mind as voluntary poverty. Many will scorn thee as an ignorant because of thy liberality and for thy giving thyself without stint for the sake of the fear of God; they will not call thee wise or steady of mind, because of thy asceticism.

If any one is riding on a horse and stretches out his hand, do not withdraw from him thy hand in which is that which his need truly requires. For at that time he is needy as one of the indigent. And what thou givest, give it with a bountiful eye, and make thy face glad towards him. And give him above what he asks, that which he does not seek. Cast thy bread upon the waters for thy shalt find remuneration after many days [3]).

Do not make any distinction between the rich and the poor nor know who is worthy and who is not worthy. Deem all men worthy of bounty on thy part. Especially because thou spurrest them unto truth thereby. The soul can easily be drawn by corporeal things to the thought of the fear of God. Also our Lord shared his table with publicans and harlots without making any distinction between those who were worthy and those who were not, seeking to spur them on thereby unto the fear of God and to bring them, through communion in bodily things, unto spiritual communion. Therefore deem all

1) Cf. *Book of the Dove*, Sentence 3.
2) Cf. the title of Chapter LXXXI and p. 8 n:s 42 sq. 3) Eccles. XI, 1.

people worthy of bounty and honour, be they Jews or miscreants or murderers. Especially if they be thy brothers and comrades who have erred from the truth on account of ignorance.

When thou doest well, do not wish a remuneration in this world; for both thou wilt be recompensed by God. If possible, do not even wish a remuneration in the world-to-come; but be excellent only by the love of God. The degree of love is more intimate than that of service unto God; nay, it is more
56 intimate in its mystery, with an intimacy that surpasses that of service as the soul's the body's.

If thou hast set for thyself the aim of renunciation, and by the grace of God thou hast been freed from care, and exalted above the world by thy renunciation, take care lest, on account of thy love of the poor, thou desire to fall back into the care of possessions and things, even with the aim of giving alms, falling thereby into trouble, taking from one to give unto another [1]); for thou wouldst expose thy honour to contempt by thy propensity to accost others in thy search for these and cognate things and thou wouldst fall back from the height of thy liberated mind unto care for earthly things.

Thy rank is higher than that of almsgivers. I pray thee, do not make thyself an object of laughter. The latter is the class of adolescents being educated; the former is the way of perfection.

If thou possessest, spend at once. If not, be not desirous to possess. Purify thy life from luxuriousness and superfluous things; this will necessarily bring thee towards asceticism.

Necessity bears many things which our will, as long as possible, would not submit to bear. Those who have overcome outward struggle have also annihilated inward fear and no compulsion can force them to go its way by confounding them with strife before and behind.

Outward struggle I name that which a man excites by the senses against himself foolishly; viz.: worldly dealings, hearing
57 and seeing, speech and stomach, gradually and continually associating himself with the practice of life, so that the soul is blinded and becomes unable, because of external troubles that meet it, to discern its self in the hidden strife that arises; then

1) To take and give is an expression denoting worldly dealings.

for the sake of quiet, he subdues that which comes from within. But if a man closes the gates of the town, there will be a strife face to face; and he will not fear from the ambushes outside the town.

Blessed is the man who knows these things and endures them in silence without even then imposing upon himself much work, but interchanging the whole of his bodily service with the labour of prayer, if he is able to do so, who, proceeding from service to service, does not join anything to the worship of God consisting in prayer and recitation, but believes that, when serving God and meditating upon Him night and day, He will not leave him in need of the necessary things he needs, because he does not work for himself.

If anyone is not able to bear solitude without service, he must necessarily have recourse to it. But he shall take it as a helpful means only, without eagerness, and as a secondary thing, not as a principal commandment.

This applies to the weak. Manual work is called by Euagrius an impediment to the recollection of God. The Fathers have prescribed service to the indigent and despondent, not to those who are zealous to perform their legal obligations.

When God opens thy mind from within and thou givest thy-
58 self to frequent kneelings, let no care of anything take hold of thee, though the demons secretly persuade thee to do so; then see and wonder at what is born in thee from these things.

Do not compare any of the ethical practices[1]) with a man's throwing himself day and night on his face before the cross, his hands turned backwards. If thou desirest that thy fervour may never abate, and that thy tears may never fail, then practice this. Blessed art thou, o man, if thou thinkest of what I have told thee, without seeking any other thing night and day. Then thy light will be spread out like dawn and thy righteousness will shortly appear[2]). Then thou wilt be like an exulting paradise and like a fountain never destitute of water.

Behold, how many signs of grace happen to a man from Providence. Sometimes a man will be on his knees at the time of prayer, his hands spread out or stretched towards heaven, his face looking to the cross, and, so to speak his whole emotion and mind stretched out towards God in supplication;

1) ܕܘܒܪܐ 2) Cf. Ps. 37,6.

and while absorbed in these beseechings and pains at this time, of a sudden a fountain of delight will spring from his heart, his limbs will relax, his eyes be darkened, his face bow down and his deliberations be confuse, so that even his knees are no longer able to lean on the earth, from the exulting joy of the sign of grace that spreads through his whole body.

Distinguish, o man, what thou art reading, can these things be known from ink? Or can the taste of honey be spread over the palate of the reader, from written documents?

If thou doest not seek, thou wilt not find. And if thou doest not wake and knock fervently at the gate, without a break, thou wilt not be answered. Who could hear these things and be desirous of outward righteousness, unless he who is not able to bear the bonds of the cell? But if there be anyone who is not able to do these things, since it is a gift of God that a man remain within the door, he should not however desist from this other part [1], lest he be bereft of the two parts of life. For until the outward man becomes dead to the ways of the world, not only to sin, but also to the whole bodily service, and the inward man to the seducing recollections of evil things, until the natural impulse is brought low and the body has almost died through labours, so that the sweetness of sin has no more mastery over the heart, the spirit of God does not spread its sweetness and man's limbs are not unveiled to life and divine impulses do not show themselves in the soul. And as long as a man's heart is not freed from earthly care, except those necessary things which nature imposes upon him at the time of his necessity — and which he leaves also to God to arrange — spiritual drunkenness cannot rise in him and that madness, for which the Apostle was disdained, he will not perceive, for the multitude of books had made him mad.

But I do not say this in despair; namely that unless a man reach the depth of perfection, the grace of God will not be given him and consolation will not come to him.

Verily, when a man rejects evil things and becomes wholly alienated to them, and clings to good things, in a short time he will be aware of profit. And if he shows only a little zeal he will find the consolation of the forgiveness of sins in himself, and he will be dignified with grace and receive many good

1) outward righteousness.

things. But he is little when compared with him who has become wholly alienated to the world and has found in himself as it were the blessings of the world to come and has reached that for the sake of which Christ reached us. To whom and to his Father and to the Holy Ghost be glory and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

Here ends the fourth discourse.

V

God has made great the honour of man, by the twofold teachings he has given him. And from every side He has opened for him a door through which he has access unto knowledge.

Ask from nature a true witness concerning thyself, then thou wilt not err. If thou goest yet astray, let thyself be taught by that second witness who will bring thee back to the way from which thou hast erred.

A distracted heart cannot help but erring. And wisdom will not open its gate before it.

He who is able to understand through essential knowledge to what a degree of equality all men will come in the end, will not seek another teacher concerning the contemptability of the world.

61 The first book given by God to the rational beings, is the nature of the created things. Written teachings have been added only after aberration.

He who does not willingly remain far from things causing sin will be drawn towards them involuntarily. Things causing sin are wine and women, riches and bodily health. They are not to be called sin in themselves, but on account of man's weakness and their unlawful use, nature is easily drawn by them — more easily than by any other thing — towards different sins and therefore there is need of peculiar caution in regard of them. If thou rememberst continually and recognisest truly that thou art weak, thou wilt never overstep the borders prescribed by watchfulness. Despised above all things among men is poverty. But much more despised by God is haughtiness of heart and a disdainful spirit.

Among men riches are honoured; by God a humble soul.

When thou intendest to begin with one of the virtues, first prepare thyself, lest, by the evil things which it causes, thou shouldst fall into doubt concerning the truth.

62 If the Evil one sees some one beginning with one of the virtues in the fervour of faith, he attacks him by vehement and terrible temptations, with the intention that he be frightened by them, so that the love of his mind may abate and his fervour not rise again to bring him near to the works of God. And thus, because of fear of temptations accompanying good works [he hopes that] nobody will practise them anymore. Thou, however, prepare thyself to meet the evil things accompanying virtues, bravely and strongly; and then begin. If thou doest not expect evil things, do not begin with excellence. The man who is in doubt concerning the Lord, is persecuted by his own shadow; at the time of satiety he will be hungry and at the time of peace his ruin will be heavy. But whoever confides in God, his heart will be strong and his honour will be manifest before the crowds and his glory before his enemies.

The commandments of God are better than the treasures of the whole earth. He who acquires His laws in his heart, will find the Lord in them. He who meditates upon God in the night, will acquire Him as a housemate. He who is pliable to His will, will find the angels of heaven his teachers.

He who trembles before sins will pass without stumbling even through a dangerous place and at the time of darkness he will find a light within himself. If any one tremble before sins, his footsteps will be guarded by the Lord and mercy will precede his failures. He whose faults are small in his own eyes will fall into those which are worse than the former ones and it will be necessary that he pay for them sevenfold. Sow alms in humility and thou wilt reap mercy in the court of justice.

63 Whereby thou hast lost goods, thereby thou shalt acquire them again. If thou hast to pay a penny to God in some way or other, He will not accept a pearl from thee in its place. For in this case that thing is necessary.

If thou hast lost chastity, let not fornication take its place. If thou givest alms as a reparation, He will not accept them from thee; He postulates saintliness for saintliness. And if thou wrongest not the poor, let not unjust possession take the place of that. While thou art refraining from bread, let not injustice usurp its place so that thou must struggle with some other thing.

Oppression is eradicated by compassion and renunciation. If thou leavest the plant in its place, thou wilt have to struggle with some other thing, according to the word of the great teacher Mar Afrem.

Take care not to fight against heat during summer in clothes destined for winter. Thus each will reap, with the contrary of that with which he sows injustice. And every illness he will combat with its peculiar antidotum. Now thou art deadly wounded by envy; while thou strugglest against sleep. When sin is still green, eradicate it, lest it cover the whole ground. He who neglects an evil thing while it is small, will find it at last a hard master and he will go in bonds before it. He who treats it severely in the beginning, will easily rule it. He who bears injustice with gladness while victory is in his hand, he has received from God the consolation of his faith clearly mani-
64 fested. And he who bears oppression in humility, has reached perfection. The angels will admire him. There is no profitable action more difficult and more meritorious.

Do not believe thyself strong before thou hast been led into temptations and thou hast found thyself steadfast in them. In all things thou hast to try thyself in this way.

Acquire glory on account of the faith of thy heart, then thou wilt tread upon the neck of thy enemies, and thou wilt find thy mind humble. Do not confide in thy strength lest thou be left to the weakness of thy nature and thou learnest thy weakness in thy fall; nor in thy knowledge, lest thou be surrounded in thought with hidden ambushes and becomest confused.

Acquire a humble tongue; then disdain will never hurt thee; and pleasant lips; then thou wilt be found a friend of every one. Do not boast of any thing with thy tongue, because among creatures there is nothing exempt from change; and thy shame will be double when thou art found the contrary [of what thou didst boast of]. Everything of which thou boastest before men, will surely be altered by God, so that thou mayest have a cause for humility so that thou judge God's knowledge to be all, and believe not that there is anything true in creatures. And when thou thinkest thus, thy eyes will at all times be fixed upon Him.

[Divine] care surrounds all men at all times; but it is not seen, save only by those who have purified themselves from

sins and think of God perpetually. To these then it is revealed
65 clearly; for when they have been led into great temptations for the sake of truth, then they receive a faculty of perception clearly as if with the eyes of the flesh. [They receive it] when they want it, in a sensible way, in accordance with the kind and the cause of the temptation, in order to strengthen their courage. As in the case of Jacob and Joshua the son of Nun, Hananya and his companions, Petrus and others, to whom the figure of a man appeared in order to encourage them and to console their faith.

If thou sayest that these things were acts of Providence of a universal nature, let then the holy martyrs console thee, who sometimes together, sometimes one by one in separate places have suffered for God. Not only a hidden force was with them, by which the members of their bodies were fortified against being hanged in irons and against torments of all kinds, things beyond natural power — but sometimes also holy angels were seen by them manifestly, in order that every man should know that God's care is with those who suffer for His sake for any reason, so that they themselves might receive encouragement and their torturers be ashamed. For as the former were made conspicuous by such visions, to the same degree the latter were tormented by their endurance.

And what shall we say about many of the solitaries and strangers and true monks, who have made waste land habitable and an encamping ground of the angels, who visited them on account of their worthy behaviour? As true comrades [serving] one Lord the heavenly hosts mingled [with them] in their
66 dwelling place, solitaries who during their whole life loved solitude, who made holes and rocks their dwelling places, who gladly suffered cold and heat for the love of God. And because they left the earth and loved heaven like the angels, the angels have not concealed themselves from their sight. But sometimes they taught them concerning behaviour. And again they answered the questions they asked them concerning other things. And sometimes the angels showed them the way when they wandered through the desert; sometimes they delivered them from temptations; sometimes they saved them from some net of danger which suddenly, without their foreseeing it, threatened them, some serpent for instance, or falling from a rock, or a stone that suddenly fell down with violence from a height.

Sometimes, also under the attacks of the open battles of Satan, the angels showed themselves to them manifestly, and clearly announced that they were sent in order to help them and encouraged them by their words. Sometimes also they cured their pain and healed some injuries which had befallen them in some way or other, by the touch of their hands. Sometimes again they imparted to their bodies, which had been weakened by abstention from all food, by their words or by the sudden
67 touch of their hands, a force foreign to nature, adducing in some secret way a force unto the lowered nature. Sometimes they brought them food, warm bread and olives, and to some of them various fruits. Others they informed concerning the time of their death. And how long must be the enumeration of things concerning the love of the holy angels towards our race and concerning the care they showed unto the righteous, as great brothers who fostered and guarded their little ones. All this serves to make clear for every one how near God is to His friends and how much care He bestows on those who entrust their life to His hands and follow Him with a serene heart.

If it is certain to thee and thou believest that God cares for thee, thou needest not be anxious for thy body nor have care concerning the guiding of thyself by means. But if thou doubtest this and desirest to care for thyself, without God, thou art more wretched than any man, and what does life mean to thee? Throw thy care on God [1], that thou be strengthened against all fear. He who once has entrusted his life to God, will dwell in mental peace.

Without renunciating possessions, the soul cannot be liberated from confusion of thought. And without quiescence of the senses, peace of mind cannot be perceived [2]. And without
68 entering into temptations, spiritual wisdom cannot be acquired. And without constant reciting, subtlety of thought cannot be learned. And without the deliberations being set at peace the mind cannot be moved by hidden mysteries. And without the confidence of faith one cannot venture to throw his soul amidst sorrowful and hard circumstances. Without the practical experience of God's care the heart is not able to confide in God. And when the soul does not taste sufferings for the sake of Christ, it is not united with Him in knowledge.

1) Ps. 55, 23. 2) Introduction

Deem him a man of God, who constantly takes upon himself the lot of want, being moved by great compassion. He who does good to the poor finds God his provider. He who suffers want for His sake finds Him to be a great treasure. God does not need anything; only He rejoices when anyone satisfies or honours His image[1]) for His sake.

When anyone asks thee and thou hast, do not say in thy heart: I will keep it for myself in order to have more comfort by it and I will let him pass quickly; God will provide for him from another; I will bestow it upon myself. Do not speak thus. For in this way think iniquitous men, and people who do not know God deliberate thus, fostering such thoughts. But a righteous man does not give his honour to another one nor does he let slip the opportunity for bounty. God will provide for him certainly in some other way; if He knows that he is in trouble. God will not abandon any one. But thou art willing
69 immediately to leave God's honour and to throw His bounty from thee. On the other hand rejoice if thou possessest and give, saying: Glory to thee, o God, who hast granted unto me that I find some one to comfort. And if thou possessest not, rejoice the more, thanking God with many thanksgivings, saying: I thank thee, o God, who hast granted me the honour of becoming poor for Thy sake, and who hast deemed me worthy to taste sufferings enjoined in Thy commandments namely illnesses and poverty such as the saints have tasted who have gone this way.

And if thou art ill, say: Blessed are those who find in the things which God sends us for our profit, the aim for which God has destined them. God sends sickness for the sake of the health of the soul.

One of the saints once said: The following I have taken as a sign. When a solitary does not serve God in the right way, and is not zealous in His works, God certainly will send him a temptation to occupy his thoughts, lest he be wholly idle and, by complete idleness, his mind turn aside to thinking of the things of the left hand. But if he is not willing to think of excellence, the influence of the temptations will cause him to think of it and not to think of idle things. This God does with every man who loves Him. When He sees that he begins

1) viz. man

to disdain His works, he sends a heavy sorrow in order to make him wise and to chastise him. Therefore, when such
70 people call to Him, He does not pay attention, nor does He hasten to free them, till they have become weary and know that they have to bear these things on account of their neglect. 'When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear' [1]). Even if this was said to others, still it is certainly applicable to those who leave the way. But if God is so compassionate, why do we then so frequently knock at His door in trouble and pray, and yet He turns away from our prayer? He says: Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear [2]). Remember the Lord at all times, then He will remember thee when evil approaches unto thee. He has made thy nature a receptacle of accident. And in the world where He has created and left thee He has made frequent the causes of accidents and temptations. He has made thy nature a small receptacle of these things. Evil things are not far from thee, neither are they a few in number. For they rise from within thee when He gives a sign, and from under thy feet and from the place where thou art standing. But like one eyelid is near the other, so temptations are near the children of men.

With wisdom God has provided these things for thee in this way, for thy profit, that thou mayest continually knock at His door and that, for fear of sorrowful events, the thought of Him may constantly recur to thy mind and thou be near to God in constant prayer and sanctified by constant thought of Him in thy heart.

And when thou callest unto Him and He answers thee, thou
71 wilt know that thy saviour is God. And thou wilt perceive thy God who has created thee and is thy provider and preserver, therein that He has made in thy behalf two worlds. One for thy instruction, as it were a school for a short time; and another one, a paternal home and thy abode for ever and ever.

He has not made thee apathetic, lest thou shouldst desire divine rank and receive what Satan received. Nor has He made

1) Is. 1, 15 2) Is. 59, 1–2.

thee incapable of error or, lest thou shouldst be like the beings which are bound and thou shouldst receive thy good and thy evil without profit or remuneration as the other corporeal beings on the earth. How many blows and humiliations together with thanksgivings are born from the capacity for affections, and fear, and also error, is manifest for every one so that it should be known that our zeal for righteousness and our turning aside from evil are of our will, and that the honour and disdain, caused thereby, should be put to our credit. Thus we are put to shame and we fear on account of disdain; but we thank God and press towards the good on account of honour.

All these instructions He has multiplied for thee, lest freed from them on account of thy not needing them or thy nature not being capable of them, exalted above fear and affecting things, thou shouldst forget God and turn away from Him and invent many gods. For though subjected to affections and want, which scourges were sent against them on account of paltry
72 riches and short-lived temporal power and precarious health, — still many have not only invented many gods, but have even ventured in their insanity to pretend to be of divine nature.

Therefore He has turned thee away from all these things through that which troubles thee from time to time, lest He should be angry with thee on account of thy turning aside and destroy thee from before Him in punishment.

I omit the ungodliness and the sins that arise from health and lack of fear and comfort, even though that which has been mentioned above should not happen [1]). Therefore, by sufferings and distress He has caused thee frequently to recall Him in thy heart; and by fear of adversities He incites thee to turn towards the gate of his mercy. By liberating thee from these [troubles] He sows in thee causes of love unto Him. And when thou hast found love he brings thee near to the honour of the sons; He shows thee the richness of His bounty and the steadfastness of His care for thee. Then He will make thee perceive the holiness of His honour and the hidden mysteries of the nature of His greatness. How shouldst thou have become acquainted with these things if there had not been adversities? For through these the love of God is able to increase, viz. by understanding His acts of bounty and by recalling His various

1) viz. that creatures pretend to be of divine nature.

acts of care. All this good is born for thee from things causing grief, if thou knowest to give thanks.

Therefore remember God, that He may remember thee constantly; and when He remembers thee and saves thee, thou wilt receive all these goods. Forget Him not in idle distraction, lest He also forget thee in thy temptations.

73 In prosperity be near to Him and obedient, that thou mayest have freedom of speech with Him in trouble because of thy constantly being near to Him in thy heart by means of thy prayer. Sit before His face all thy time, thinking of Him and recollecting Him in thy heart, lest, seeing Him only after long thou shouldst lack freedom of speech with Him on account of bashfulness. A high degree of freedom of speech is born from constant intercourse. Constant intercourse with men is of a bodily nature; that with God is psychic meditation and offerings in prayers.

On account if its intensity this meditation is sometimes mingled with ecstasy. For the heart of those who seek the Lord rejoices. Seek the Lord, ye sinners and be strengthened in hope in your thoughts. Seek His face by repentance at all time and you will be sanctified by the holiness of His face and you will be purified from your unrighteousness. Speed unto the Lord, ye unrighteous, the Lord who forgives unrighteousness and effaces sins. For He has sworn: I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that he turn from his way and live[1]. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious and disobedient people[2]. And why will ye die, O house of Jacob[3]? Turn unto me, then I will turn unto you[4]. And by Ezekiel He says: When the wicked turns from his way unto the Lord and do that which is lawful and right, the sins he has com-
74 mitted will not be remembered but he shall live, sayeth the Lord[5]. Thus it is also with the righteous; when he turneth from his righteousness and comitteth sin and iniquity, the righteousness he has done will not be remembered but I will lay a stumbling block before him and by the iniquity he has done he shall die if he remains steadfast in it[6]. Why is this? Because the iniquitous will not stumble on account of his iniquity after he turns unto the Lord. But the righteousness of the righteous

1) Ez. 33, 11. 2) Is. 65, 2. 3) Ez. 33, 11. 4) Zach. 1, 3.
5) Cf. Ez. 33, 19. 6) Cf. Ez. 33, 18.

will not save him when he sins, if he builds his building on that foundation.

And to Jeremia He spake thus: Take a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee, from the day of Josia the king of Juda even unto this day. It may be that [the house of Juda] will hear and fear and they may return every man from his evil way and turn again unto me, that I may forgive their sins [1]). And the sage has said: He that covereth his sins, shall not prosper. But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy from God [2]).

And Jesaja, who was rich in revelations, says: Seek ye the Lord and call ye upon Him when ye have found Him. And when He is near let the sinner forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him turn unto me and I will have mercy upon him and to our God for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts neither are my ways your ways [3]). Wherefore do ye [4]) spend money on that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good. Come unto me, hear and your soul shall live [5]).
75 When thou keepest the ways of the Lord and doest His will, then thou wilt confide in the Lord. Then thou wilt call on Him and He will answer thee; thou wilt cry and He will say: Lo, here I am.

The wicked when evil befalls him has confidence in God to call on Him. And he is not able to expect His salvation, because he has left His ways in the days of his prosperity.

Seek a helper for thyself before thou hast to struggle.

Seek a physician for thyself before thou art ill. Pray before distress has reached thee; then in the time of distress thou wilt find prayer(?) and it will answer thee. Pray and ask before thou stumblest. Prepare thy gifts before thou makest a vow, they are thy provisions.

The ark was constructed in time of peace. A hundred years before its wood was planted. So when anger came, the wicked who had been comfortable in their wickedness, were confounded. But the ark was a refuge for the righteous.

The wicked shuts his mouth during prayer. Inward baseness takes away freedom of speech from the heart.

1) Cf. Jeremia 36, 2 sq. 2) Prov. 28, 13. 3) Is. 55, 6—8.
4) The Syriac text adds not. 5) Cf. Is. 55, 2 sq.

Steadfastness of the heart makes tears of joy to flow during the imploration [of God].

Strong endurance of injustice borne by free will purifies the heart. Endurance of injustice is based on contempt for the world. That a man remains steadfast during oppression without being distressed, is caused by the fact that the heart begins to see the truth. Joy on account of oppression and injustice borne by free will, exalts the heart. No one can bear oppression and injustice with a glad will, save those whose deliberations have wholly become dead to the world.

Those whose thoughts are wholly filled with the odour of
76 this life, are made to blaze with anger at once through vain glory; or they fall into thoughts of spite, born of [the love of vain glory]. O how difficult is this excellence, and how honoured it is with God! He who denies this behaviour, has to go abroad and to leave his country. It is difficult for a man to accomplish this exalted excellence in his country; the eminent and the strong only are able to bear the grief that is born of this behaviour, among their acquaintances and also those who in their lifetime have become dead to this life and have abandoned hope of the consolation of this time. As Grace is near to humility, so are difficult accidents to haughtiness.

The heart of the Lord is towards the humble, to comfort them. The face of the Lord is against the haughty to humiliate them. Humility receives compassion, continually. But hardness of heart and unbelief meet hardships continually that seem hopeless till of a sudden evil rises against them and they are delivered to destruction.

Make thyself small among men, then He will exalt thee even above the heads of the people. Let thy prostration be low before all men and be the first to salute; then thou wilt be honoured more than he who brings gold from Ophir. Be despised and rejected in thine own eyes, then thou wilt see the glory of God within thyself.

77 Where humility sprouts, there glory will rise. If thou strivest publicly after dishonour among men he will make thy honour great. And if thou art humble in thy heart, He will show thee His glory in thy heart. Be disdained in thy greatness, not great in thy being disdained. Learn to be disdained, while being full of the honour of the Lord; not, to be honoured while being injured by ulcers within. Reject honour, then thou

wilt be honoured. Do not love it, lest thou be rejected. If thou pursuest honour, it will flee from thee. If thou fleest from it, it will rise for thee from the place where thou hidest thyself and it will be a herald of thy humility to every one.

If thou givest thyself to disdain in order to be honoured, the Lord will confound thee. If thou rejectest thyself for the sake of truth He will command the creatures to praise thee. And they will reveal to thee the glory of the creator who from eternity speaks through them and they will glorify thee as the creator, because thou art His true image.

Has anyone found a man whose behaviour is exalted, who is despised among men and who is enlightened and wise and poor in spirit? Blessed is he who has humbled himself in all things, for he will be magnified in all things. He who has humbled and made himself small for the sake of God, will be glorified by God. And whoever for His sake is hungry and thirsty, He will give to drink him from His good a wine causing a drunkenness that never leaves those who drink it. And he who goes naked for His sake will be clad by Him with a garment of glory. And he who is poor and indigent
78 for His sake, his consolation will be established in His true richness. Make thyself disdained for the sake of God, then thy glory will be great, even if thou doest not perceive it.

During thy whole life deem thyself as a sinner, then thou wilt found to be a righteous man during thy whole life. Be despised though wise, and do not err in thy wisdom. Be simple in thy wisdom and do not assume the appearance of being wise if thou art simple. If humility elevates the despised how, much more will it elevate the honoured.

Flee from praise, then thou wilt be praised. Fear haughtiness, then thou wilt be exalted. For pride was not assigned to the children of man, nor haughtiness of heart to those born from a woman.

If thou hast voluntarily renunciated the whole body of the world, do not quarrel with anyone concerning small parts of it.

If thou hast rejected glory, flee from those who hunt praise.

Flee from possessors as from possessions. Depart from the luxurious, as from luxury. Flee from the lascivious, as from fornication. If the memory of their habits troubles the mind, how much more if one see and be near to them. Be near to the excellent; through them thou wilt be near unto God.

Be an ascete with the humble, to learn from his ways. If to see his habits is profitable to those who see him, how much more the character of his behaviour and teachings received from his very lips.

Love the poor; through them thou wilt find mercy. Do not approach unto the quarrelsome, lest thou be compelled to leave thy peaceful customs.

Flee not from the ugliness of the illness of the sick, for thou art also clad with flesh. Do not contend with the bitter in
70 heart, lest thou be beaten with the rod with which they are beaten and seeking a consolator, wilt not find any. Do not reject the cripples lest thou enter Sheol with them.

Love the sinners but reject their works. Do not despise them because of their shortcomings, lest thou be tempted by the same. Remember that thou sharest in the stink of Adam and that thou too art clad with his illness. To him who needs passionate prayer and soft words, do not give blame in stead, lest thou cause his destruction and his soul be demanded from thy hand. Resemble the physicians who use cold medicines against symptoms of fever.

Compel thyself to show honour to thy fellow man, when thou meetest him; and kiss his hand and his foot, and warm thy heart with love unto him, piously. And take his hands several times and place them upon thy eyes and caress them with great honour. And attribute to his person beautiful things, that do not belong to him. And also when he is absent, speak about him fine and beautiful things and call him by several honourable names. By these things and the like, thou compellest him not only unto the desire of beautiful things, since he will be ashamed of the renown thou imputest him without his deserving it and so thou wilt be able to sow in him the seed of excellent things, but by means of these habits and the
80 like to which thou accustomest thyself, thou wilt found in thyself peaceful and humble customs and be liberated from many severe struggles, against which others learn to guard themselves by steady works. And not only this. But if he, who receives these honours from thee, has any shortcoming or fault of will, he will easily acquire from thee healing, if thou lettest him clearly perceive [it] but for an instant only; for he will be ashamed because of the honour shown to him and because of the sign of love he constantly perceives in thee.

This be thy aim regarding all men. And when thou becomest angry at any one and zealous for the sake of faith, or on account of his evil works, or thou reprehendest and vituperatest him, then be cautious. We all have a just judge in heaven. But if thou art merciful and seekest to turn him unto the truth, thou hast to suffer for him. And with tears and in love thou must speak to him without being enraged against him, effacing all sign of hostility from thy face. Love does not know how to be angry; it is not indignant, it does not despise so as to cause suffering. Wherever the sign of love and knowledge is present, it is profound humility rising from the inner mind.

VI

81 The fact that a man may fall into accidental faults, proves the weakness of his nature, namely that our nature necessarily is liable to such things. It has not seemed good unto God that it would be profitable for him that he should be wholly exalted above this [weakness], before his nature arrived at the second creation. The fact of his being subject to chance, is profitable for the subjugation of the mind. But the constant [falling into faults] causes audacity.

There are three modes by which every rational soul may approach unto God: by the fervour of faith; by fear; by punishment from God. For it cannot approach unto the rank of love by its own power; but only if it is based on one of these modes.

As from a disordered [1]) belly confusion of thought is born, so, from wantonness in speech and confusion of habits, ignorance and folly of mind.

The care of practical things confuses the soul, and the distraction of work disturbs the mind and makes it lose its quietness and drives away from it its peacefulness. It is becoming for the solitary who has devoted himself to heavenly work, that his mind be constantly free from care so that, when he examines his soul and deliberates, he may not see in it any thing belonging to this world, nor desire of any visible object,
82 but that, on account of his complete absorption from temporary

1) Cf. Thomas a Kempis' *incredibilis*.

things, he may be able to meditate upon the law of the Lord night and day, without any distraction.

Bodily works without mental beauty are like a barren womb and dry breasts; they do not bring any nearer unto the knowledge of God. They have no care for a body labouring to eradicate passions from the mind; so they do not reap anything.

As a man who sows on thorns and is not able to reap, so is he whose mind is injured by care and wrath and desire of gathering treasures, and who sighs on his bed on account of the frequency of his vigils and abstinence. Witness is the scripture that says: As a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in coming near unto God. Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not? Have we afflicted our soul and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure and sacrifice unto all your idols [1].

This means: the evil designs and the evil thoughts hold you in yourself in stead of God and sacrifice to them your liberty, a thing esteemed at all times; the sacrifice which is honoured above all things and which you ought not to omit, consists of your good works and pious inner being. A good land which makes its lord rejoice by yielding an hundredfold, is the soul
83 that is made excellent by meditation on God, in vigil day and night. The Lord will build upon its foundations and around it, a cloud for shade during the day and a shining flame of fire during the night. From within its darkness, light will dawn.

As a cloud obscures the rays of the moon, so the vapour of the stomach obscures the divine wisdom so that the soul does not see it [2]. As a hearth burning with dry wood, so is bodily desire in a full stomach. As oily matter excites the fierceness of a flame, so does the humidity of food the carnal passion in the body.

The knowledge of God does not dwell in a body that loves comfort.

A man who loves his body will not be deemed worthy of divine gifts.

As from the travail a fruit is born that gladdens the woman, so from labours there is born in the soul the knowledge of God's mysteries. To the pusillanimous and those who love

1) Is. 58, 2 sq. 2) Cf. *Book of the Dove* p. 27 note 3.

comfort, a fruit is born that causes shame. As a father shows mercy unto his son, so Christ shows mercy unto the body that performs labours, and He is near its mouth at all times. The labour of wisdom is priceless.

A stranger is he who is strange is his spirit unto every habit of this world. A mourner[1]) is he, who spends all the days of this life in hunger, thirst and mourning, for the sake of the expectation of heavenly hope. A recluse is he who,
84 removing his abode from the sight of the world, and looking beyond, has only one demand in prayer: the desire of the world to be. The riches of the solitary are in his heart[2]). The riches of the solitary are either consolation granted him from the midst of mourning, or gladness that dawns from faith, the treasury of his spirit. The compassionate is he, whose spirit does not distinguish, when practising compassion, any of the classes of men. Virginity is this, that a man not only guards his body from the corruptions of revelling, but that he also guards his chastity against his soul even when he is alone. If thou desirest chastity, restrain the course of impure deliberations, by occupying thyself with recitation and constant beseechings unto God. Then thou wilt be armed also in thy inner being against the things that spring from nature. Without those, man is able to see purity in himself.

If thou art desirous to acquire compassion, first train thyself to acquire contempt for [outward] things, lest their importance draw the mind away from the aim which it has set before itself. The purity of compassion is known from patience in bearing wrong, and the perfection of humility from idle oppression borne gladly. If thou art really compassionate, thou wilt not be angry within thyself, when thou art bereft of thy possessions iniquitously and with injustice; and thou wilt not show thy suffering openly unto others, but let the sin of thy injustice be effaced by pas-
85 sionate compassion, as the headiness of wine is abated by [mixing it with] much water. But show thou the mark of purity that arises from great mercy, by adding there-unto other things and do well to those who do thee wrong, with gladness, as also the blessed Elisha did unto his enemies, which were come to take him prisoner who, by praying and by blinding their eyes

1) ܐܒܠܐ, also a word for weak.
2) Supplied from London Mss.

by visions, made manifest the power at his disposal. And if he had wished this, they would have been annihilated before him; but by providing them with food and drink and letting them go away, he made manifest the mercy he possessed within himself.

If thou art truly humble, be not troubled if thou art oppressed. And do not excuse thyself in any point, but actually take upon thee the wrong laid to thy charge, without being anxious to persuade people that the matter is otherwise. On the contrary, pray that thou mayest obtain forgiveness. Some have taken upon them the evil name of fornication and others have taken upon them deeds of adultery for which they were too pious, and the fruit of a sin which they had not committed they made appear serious by bewailing it as if it were their own. And they implored forgiveness for sins which they had not committed from their oppressor with tears, while their soul was crowned with the full purity of chastity. Others, lest they should be praised on account of wonderful deeds performed in secret, have assumed the habits of lunatics, though they were in the full possession of their wits and their serenity; so that so the holy angels, in admiration of these deeds, became spectators of the greatness of such men. Thou, however, hast assumed humility where those others have given witness against themselves; thou art not even able to keep silence if thou art accused, and yet thou deemest thyself to be humble? If thou art [really] humble, try thyself by these things, whether or not thou art troubled.

The many mansions in the house of the Father denote the spiritual degrees of the inhabitants of that place. This means: the different gifts and the spiritual ranks in which they rejoice spiritually, and the variety of the classes of gifts. It is not to be understood in such a manner, that every person has really his defined portion in the various local habitations, so that [these differences] manifest themselves openly in the variety of particular mansions appointed for every one; but they are to be compared with the personal advantage every one of us obtains by the personal yet common use of this apperceptible sun in accordance with the purity of his visual power. Thus as the eyelid regulates the effusion of the quality of light, and as a lamp[1]), in one and the same house, distributes the use of

1) The same comparison is used by Ghazâli, *Ihyâ'*, III, p. 4.

its light in a varied fashion, although the lamp itself is not bereft of the simplicity of its light, so as to become many with its varied aspects, so, those who have been deemed worthy of that place, although dwelling in one mansion, indivisible as it is into parts, attract, at a fixed time, from one and the same intelligible sun, every one according to the rank of his beha-
87 viour, the own delight, in one air and one place and one abode and with one sight and one mode. The high degree of his neighbour's rank is not seen by him who is inferior, namely not as if it arose from the many gifts of his neighbour and from the scarcity of his own gifts, so that it should be to him a cause of grief and spiritual torment, absit! To think such things in the place of delights were impossible. Every one rejoices within himself at the gift he has been deemed worthy of, and at the height of his rank. But the outward aspect of them all, is one; and the place is one. And what is still truer, they dwell as in encampments of angels, in one aereal abode, in equality of actual vision, with secret consciousness of their [different] ranks, in contemplative revelations that vary according to their degree.

If real personal beings possess, apart from working apperceptive power, also spiritual impulses, no one will venture, even in the world to be, to proclaim in words an order of things deviating from this one: that [that the only differentiation is with regard to] the intellect and further [spiritual] powers, even though [this differentiation] be very manifest on account of the perfection of nature. True, therefore, is the word spoken by the Fathers: on the one hand there is ignorance for an undetermined time; on the other hand there is a limited time for the manifestation of its abrogation, together with [the revelation of] other peculiar mysteries that are defined in silence by the [supreme] being. For there is no mean between com-
88 plete elevation and absolute abasement, in the future separation. Either one belongs wholly to the high ones or wholly to the low ones. But within this and the other [state] there are varying modes of retribution.

And if this be true, as it is true, what then is the folly of some, who say: I do not desire to be in the kingdom; if I only could strive after salvation from hell. Being saved from hell is the kingdom. And being without the kingdom is hell. For the scriptures do not teach three places [in the world to

be]. What do they teach: When the son of man shall come in his glory, he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left [1]). Here the scriptures do not mention three classes, but two: those of the right hand and those of the left. The difference between the dwelling place is given distinctly. And these, it says, shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the father [2]), and those [will depart] into everlasting fire [3]). Further: They shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham in the kingdom [4]). And the children of the promise that have not been obedient shall go into the darkness outside the kingdom. There will be psychic weeping and grinding of teeth, which is a grief more hard than the fire. Now thou understandest that to remain far from that elevation means torturing hell.

It is beautiful for a man to admonish mankind unto beau-
80 tiful things and to bring them, by his constant care, from error to the knowledge of life. And this is the stage of our Lord and the apostles, and it is very elevated. But if he perceives within himself, that by familiar and constant intercourse, his inner being becomes injured by the sight of [worldly] things, and his serenity is disturbed so as to lose its discernment, and is darkened, since his spirit still acquires cautiousness and stricter submission of the senses. For he is sick as long as his senses are not yet healed: and wishing to heal others, he loses his own partial health of soul and quits the chaste freedom of his will for a troubled mind. Such a one has to recall the word of the apostle who says: Strong meat belongeth to the healthy [5]), and he shall turn back, lest he hear from them, symbolically: How art thou a physician for others, yet full of wounds thyself? Accordingly he shall keep to himself and guard his own health only. Then instead of audible words he shall care [6]) for a beautiful behaviour, and others will profit not by his spoken words, but by the health in which he holds himself, if possible. Thus by his health they will be healed, even though he be absent, [that is to say] by the zeal of his excellent deeds, which is a more excellent thing than to serve them merely with words, while sick himself, and in need of healing more than they themselves.

1) Matthew 25, 32. 2) Matthew 13, 43. 3) Matthew 25, 41. 4) Matthew 8, 11.
5) Hebrews 5, 14. 6) Read [illegible]

For if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch [1].
90 For strong meat belongeth to the healthy and to those whose senses have been trained and strengthened so as to receive all kinds of food, that is [those that are strengthened] against all sensual shocks, because the heart is healthy on account of its training in perfection.

But when Satan desires to defile the chaste spirit by thoughts of fornication, he first tempts its endurance by vain glory, since the beginning of such a thought does not resemble that of the affections. This he does with the guarded spirit into which he cannot easily instill a thought which is purely evil. But when he that was strong, by meditating on old thoughts has left his fortress and when he is at some distance from it, Satan causes him to be assailed by full opportunity of fornication, by associating the spirit with lascivious things.

At first the spirit feels a sudden terror when it meets them, because of the chastity of the deliberations that meet the [worldly] things, for the mind, their governor, has refrained from looking at them before. But it falls from the height of its original thought, even though it be not defiled. And it does not turn and regains quickly the former deliberations which are the cause of the secondary ones, then, when it meets often with these things, custom will blind the discernment of the soul through frequency of meeting. So in accordance with the quantity and the character of the first affection, is the submission to the second.

To avoid the affections by the recollection of virtues is easier and more beautiful than to vanquish them in strife. For when the affections leave their place and are in motion so as
91 to show themselves at strife, then they also print on the spirit forms and images. [People of] this rank [2] possess a great valiance, so that they draw strength from the spirit; but the mind is greatly disturbed and troubled. By the former way of proceeding mentioned, even the traces of affections are not known in the spirit when they have departed.

Bodily labours and meditating upon the scriptures preserve purity. And labours are made firm by hope and fear. Hope and fear are established in the spirit by seclusion from the

1) Matthew 15, 14.
2) Namely those who vanquish the affections.

children of man and by constant prayer[1]). Until man has received the Comforter, he needs written documents[2]), in order to fix in his heart, by images, profitable recollections. And by constant meditation upon them, he will renew the attractions of excellence and see in himself caution against the narrow paths of sin; for he does not yet possess the dominating force of spirit which reduces to oblivion those powers which bereave man of profitable recollections and adduce in him languor by distraction of mind.

But when spiritual force enters and dwells in the intelligible forces of the operative soul, then there are fixed in the heart in stead of written laws spiritual commandments, which the heart learns secretly from the spirit, which does not need the help of sensible material[3]) by the medium of the senses.

Whenever the mind learns from matter this instruction is followed by error and forgetfulness. But whenever it draws instruction from incorruptible things, its recollection will also be incorruptible, founded on their intelligible nature.

92 There are good deliberations and there is a good will. There are evil deliberations and there is an evil heart. The former, without the latter are of little account for remuneration. The latter are impulses which blow over the mind, as the winds that blow over the sea causing waves to arise. But the latter are the roots. And in accordance with the fundamental direction is also the good or the bad remuneration; not in accordance with the motion of the deliberations. For the soul does not cease from setting into motion varying deliberations, and if thou calculatest a remuneration for all these even though they have no root beneath, thou wilt be near to changing thy remuneration and thy retributions thousand times every day.

A young bird without wings is the mind that has lately left the bonds of the affections, by means of the works of repentance. At the time of prayer it strives to exalt itself above earthly things, but it cannot. For it creeps still on the surface of the earth, where also the serpent crawls. But it concentrates its deliberations by recitation and works and fear and care for excellent qualities. For beyond these it does not yet know anything. And these keep the mind pure for a short time. But

1) ܒܥܘܬܐ 2) Litt.: impressions in ink.
3) ܡܠܘܐܐ

then recollections will return, troubling and defiling the heart. For he does not yet perceive the air of peace and liberty, which concentrates the mind for a long time, [keeping it] quiet without any recollection of [worldly] things. For it has still
93 wings of flesh, viz. bodily virtues which are exercised openly. But is does not yet see and perceive the theoretical significance of the virtues exercised, which consists in wings of the mind by which it approaches unto heavenly things and is removed far from the earth.

As long as man serves God in a way that can be perceived by the senses and in [outward] things, the prints of things will be delineated in his deliberations and his mind will think of divine things in bodily forms. But when he perceives that which is within things, then, according to the measure of its apperceptive power, the mind will also be exalted above the forms of things in due time. The eyes of the Lord are upon the humble and His ears are willing to hear them [1]). The prayer of the humble [goes] as it were from his mouth unto [God's] ear: O Lord, my God, let my darkness be enlightened. When thou art [occupied] in solitude with the beautiful work of humility, when thy soul is near unto coming forth from under the darkness, this will be thy sign: thy heart will burn and glow as with fire, night and day, so that thou wilt esteem all earthly things as ash and dung. This means that it will not even please thee to touch food, on account of the pleasure of the new, fervent deliberations, which move continually within thee. Then, of a sudden, the fountain of tears will be given thee, so that they flow from thy eyes, as the waters of brooks, without compulsion, mingling themselves with all thy work, viz. with thy recitation and with thy prayer, with thy service and with thy meditation, with thy food and with thy drink, with all that thou doest tears will stream. If thou observest this in
94 thyself, take heart, thou hast passed through the sea. Continue thy labours, keep thy cautiousness sound that thy grace may augment from day to day. As long as thou hast not yet met with these things, thy way has not yet finally reached the mountain of God.

If this state vanishes after thou hast found it and if this fervour abates, without thy proceeding to take another thing

1) Cf. Ps. 34,15.

as its substitute, woe to thee, what hast thou lost! Either thou hast become haughty, or thou art lax. What is it that is situated after tears, and what a man meets after having passed beyond them, and what there is further after this latter state, we will describe beneath, in those chapters which deal with the course of behaviour, as a thing concerning which we are enlightened by the scriptures and by the Fathers who were entrusted such mysteries.

If thou hast no works thou shalt not speak about excellence. Dearer to God are trials for righteousness' sake, than all vows and sacrifices. And dearer is the odour of the sweat of the fatigue they cause, than all the drugs of sweet scent and exquisite perfumes.

All excellence, which does not vex the body, must be deemed by thee a miscarriage without a soul. The sacrifices of the righteous are the tears of their eyes, and their acceptable offerings are the sighs of their vigils. The saints lament because of the dulness of the body and they sigh and send their prayers unto God with suffering. And at the voice of their lamentations the
95 holy hosts assemble to them in order to give them heart through hope and to console them. The holy angels are their partners during the temptations and sufferings of the saints, because they are near to them.

Labours and humility make man a God on the earth. Faith and compassion give a speedy advance to clearness. Fervour and a broken heart cannot dwell in one soul; neither do those that are drunk know control of their mind. When fervour has been given, sorrow and mourning are taken away. Wine has been given for gladness, and fervour for the joy of the soul. The former warms the heart, the word of God the mind. Those who are kindled by fervour, are transported to the world to be in their deliberations by meditations of hope. As to those who are drunk with wine, various hallucinations present themselves, so he, who is drunk and is ablaze does not know trouble, nor the world nor anything in it. These things happen to those who are simple of heart and fervent with hope.

The many things which will happen unto those who go the traditional course of behaviour after long labours of purification are tasted by them, in the beginning of the way, by faith of soul only. All that the Lord wills, He does.

Blessed are those who, in the sea of troubles, keep themselves

simple and avoid investigation, in fervour to God, without turning their back, for they will quickly be safe in the harbour of the promises and rest in the mansions attained by all who labour well. There they are consoled for their toiling, exulting
96 with the joy of their hope.

Those who proceed with hope, are not liable to see the injuries on the way; neither are they able to investigate the like. But when they have gone ashore they appear unto them, and they praise God [thinking of] how they have been guarded amidst all those storms and the many cliffs of which they were unconscious, because they were not anxious to look at such things. But those who cherish serious thoughts and wish to deal very prudently, and give themselves up to evolving deliberations and to bear and make many preparations, and wish to see and to deliberate the causes of injuries and thoughts of relaxation, such are usually constantly found at the door of their houses. For the slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets [1]). And as those who said: And there we saw the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers [2]). And the cities are strong and walled up to heaven [3]). These are the people who at the time of death are found at the beginning of their way. They are those who constantly wish to act prudently, but never to begin. But the simple swims and passes with his first ardour. He does not think of the body nor of the possibility that his commerce will not prosper.

Let not the greatness of thy wisdom be a stumbling-block for thyself and a snare before thee, preventing thee from beginning manly and quickly, in the hope in God, thy course
97 cleansed with blood, lest thou be constantly needy and devoid of the knowledge of God.

He who looks at the winds will not sow. Better for us is death in the war for [the sake of] God, than a life of shame and baseness [4]). If thou wilt begin with one of the works of God, make thy testament beforehand as one who has no further life in this world and as one prepared for death. Draw near to it without hope, as one whose end will be reached in that action and as if it will be the end of thy days without thy seeing any more. Let this be truly decided in thy mind, lest victory

1) Proverbs 22, 13 2) Numbers 13, 33 3) Deut. 1, 28 4) Cf. p. 31

be taken from thee through hope of life, being a cause of spiritual laxity.

Therefore let not wisdom reign wholly over thy actions. Give quickly room also to faith in thy spirit. Remember constantly the days after death and let laxity never enter thy soul, according to the word of the sage who has said: A thousand years in this world are not like one day in the world of the righteous [1]).

Begin manly with every work of excellence; do not approach it with a double heart. Do not doubt in thy heart, on the way of thy course, of the hope of God's grace, lest thy toiling become in vain and the work of thy service become heavy for thee. But believe in thy heart that God is merciful and gives grace to those who seek Him, not in accordance with our service but in accordance with the love of our soul and with our faith in Him. For as thou hast believed, so it will happen unto thee.

98 Some are occupied by knocking their head the whole day in stead of by their services; and with some, perpetual kneelings take the place of the number of their prayers. Some are occupied by the course of their tears in stead of by their canonical [duties] without seeking any thing besides, because it is better to them than all other things. Some fulfill the laws prescribed to them by their zeal for their spiritual meditations, by their suffering from hunger which eats away their flesh. Some are withheld from accomplishing their work, by the torments which torture their stomach. Some do not make a break in their reciting of Psalms on account of their spiritual fervour. The heart of some is set aflame by written words; some are captivated by the understanding thereof. And there are some whose lips are withheld from their ordinary course by the stupor caused by the contents of their recitation. Some taste all these things and are satisfied and turn away and desist. Some taste a little from them only, and become puffed up and isolent and forget.

Some are held back from them by the severe suffering from their plagues; some by all kinds of allurements; some by power, some by glory among men, others by passion for [worldly] things; some by wanton occupations. Some however advance

1) Cf. Ps. 84, 11

well and making up their mind, they do not turn their back before they have taken possession of the pearl.

Begin every work for the sake of God joyfully. And if thou art pure from affections and from doubt of heart, God will remunerate thee and help thee and give thee wisdom, and according to His will and in a wonderful way He will bring thee to perfection. To whom be glory and power and adoration and exaltation for ever and ever. Amen.

Completed are the six treatises on the behaviour of excellence.

VII

ON OTHER SUBJECTS, CHAPTER BY CHAPTER, IN SHORT SECTIONS. ON THE CHARACTER OF TRUST IN GOD AND FOR WHOM IT IS BECOMING TO TRUST IN GOD. AND FURTHER: WHEN A MAN TRUSTS, HE WILL HAVE POWER ACCORDING TO [THE STATE OF] HIS MIND. AND WHO TRUSTS FOOLISHLY AND WITHOUT DISCERNMENT

There is a trust in God, with a faith of the heart, which is beautiful and which rises from the discernment of knowledge. And there is another trust which is insipid and rises from folly; and this is false trust.

That a man who has absolutely no care for any of these passing things and whose soul is night and day given to the works of God, without thought of any work of this world because of his great zeal for excellence and because of his absorbing anxiety for the divine things, and who, therefore, neglects to prepare dress and food and to fix and to prepare a place for his shelter and the like, — that such a man trusts in God that He will prepare in its due season all he needs and that He will care for him — this is really true trust and a trust of wisdom. And in truth, for such a man it is also beautiful to confide in God, because he is His servant, and he is ladened with thoughts concerning Him and he bears the weight of His works without neglect. And so it is becoming

to Him to show care for him, which is distinguished from His care for the rest of mankind, because he has eminently maintained in his person the word of our Lord saying: seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness [1]) and: Take no thought for your body [2]). And if ye care for this, the world will prepare all for you, like as a servant. And as unto a master it will be obedient unto your words without hesitation, without thwarting your will in anything.

Therefore, because such a man does not desist on account of [worldly] causes from standing perpetually before Him, he will not surrender himself to those things which the body needs. For he does not care for other things either, but he abstains from them all equally, be they small or great, be they things of comfort or pleasure — an abstention based on fear of God. So he will find sustenance in a wondrous way, even though he does not touch any of these things, nor fatigues himself with them.

Another however, whose heart is wholly buried in the earth and who constantly eats dust with the serpent without caring in any way for the things pleasant to God, who fatigues himself in every respect by the bodily things and is occupied by and constantly cares for intercourse and pleasure and luxury, and who has manifold worldly connections, — when such a man, given to such laxity and indifference regarding excellence, from time to time gets into trouble or want, or the fruits of sinfulness disturb him in any way, and [when he] says as follows:
101 I trust in God, He will work for me without doubt and He will comfort me, — o fool, till now thou hast not recalled God but thou hast disdained Him by the laxity of thy works and His name was slandered among the nations, as the scripture says. And now thou sayest with a full mouth: I confide in Him who will help me and care for me. God has well said through the prophet, scorning such people: They seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice [3]). To them belongs the fool who does not even spiritually come near unto God, but, at a time when the darkness of troubles surrounds him, elevates his hands unto Him in confidence. That such become wise, requires that they

1) Matthew 6, 33 2) Matthew 6, 25 3) Jes. 58, 2

be branded several times. For, although they have no works such as could be a basis for trust in God, yet they have been thought worthy of chastisement and loaded with mercy, as it were from [the midst] of their evil works and their indifference regarding their duties. They should not mislead themselves and, forgetting the rank of their previous way of life, say: I trust in God. Such have to be chastised, lest they, though not possessing works of faith, stretch out their feet in idleness, saying: I believe that God will give me to eat, as if they were toiling in the works of God.

Or it may come to pass that some one goes and falls into a pit through his own folly, and although he has never thought of God before, he says now: I trust in God, He will
102 deliver me. Err not, thou fool. Trust in God has to be preceded by works for the sake of God and by the sweat of His service. If thou believest in God thou doest well. But also faith requires works; and confidence in Him requires the testimony of the heart which is born of the toils [for the sake] of excellence. Believe that God is He who cares for His creatures and who is clad with all power. But connect with this faith the works which suit it. Then He will answer thee. Take no wind in thy fist, viz. faith without deeds.

If a man travel a road without being conscious of the fact that there are evil beasts or murderers on it, or the like, how many times will this universal care of God cause [the danger] to pass, by retaining him at the place where he is, for any cause, till the danger is over, or by some one meeting him and causing him to return. Or another time, a dangerous serpent lies on the way, which he has not noticed. If God will that he be not entangled in evil, the animal will at once make a sound or leave its place and disappear, or it will creep farther so that he sees it and is cautious. Thus God will save him, even if he be not worthy, for motives which God alone knows, especially for His mercy's sake. Or, another time a house or a wall or a rock is on the point of falling or slipping from its place and coming down instantly [at the place] where
103 some men are sitting. Thereupon God will order an angel and will hinder this accident and prevent it till those people have risen [and left] that place, for any reason whatsoever that makes them go away, so that none will remain under [the falling thing]. But as soon as they have left [the place], it will

fall. But if it happens that anyone be under it, he will not be damaged. By this God desires to show the greatness of His power.

Such things and the like are [signs of] universal care. The righteous possesses this grace perpetually; as an individual, not [1]) as a member of the community. The rest, however, are ordered by God to govern themselves with insight and to mingle in their affairs intelligence with the care of God. But the righteous does not need this insight in order to govern with it his affairs. In stead of this insight he possesses faith by which he storms strong fortresses. And such things as we have enumerated he does not fear. As scripture says: the righteous is bald as a lion [2]) and he ventures all through his faith. Not as one who tempts God but as one who possesses confidence in Him and as one who is armed and strongly clad with the force of the spirit. And concerning His great perpetual care for him God has said thus: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him. With long life I will satisfy him, and shew him my salvation [3]). He who is
104 weak in his works and lax or negligent, or whose deeds are evil, it is impossible that this hope be his. But it will be for him that is constantly with God in all things and who is His relative by his beautiful works, who directs constantly the gaze of his heart towards God's grace, as David says: My eyes fail while I wait for the Lord [4]).

VIII

WHAT IT IS THAT HELPS A MAN TO COME NEAR UNTO GOD WITH HIS HEART AND WHY IT IS THAT HELP COMES NEAR UNTO HIM SECRETLY AND WHAT IT IS THAT CAUSES A MAN TO COME NEAR UNTO HUMILITY

Blessed is the man who knows his weakness. This knowledge becomes for him the foundation and the beginning [of his coming] unto all good and beautiful things. When a man

1) Lacking in one of the London Mss. 2) Proverbs 28, 1
3) Ps. 91, 15 4) Cf. Ps. 119, 123

knows and perceives that he really and in truth is weak, then he restrains his soul from profuseness which is dissipation of knowledge and he will augment the watchfulness of his soul.

Unless a man has been remiss in some small thing and a slight negligence has appeared in him and tempters have surrounded him either with temptations that arouse bodily affections or with temptations which stir the affectable power of the soul, he cannot perceive his own weakness, Then, however, he recognizes the greatness of God's help by comparing it with his own weakness.

Thus if he sees that his heart does not rest from fear, even though he be provident and very cautious, withdrawing and
105 hiding his soul in innumerable apartments and providing his soul with causes of trust, then he understands and knows that this whole impulse of his heart denotes some other thing which is lacking and which is very necessary to him, viz. that he needs other help. For the heart testifies to [this] within, by the fear that moves in it, denoting the lack of something. And therefore he cannot remain in confidence. For the help of God is necessary for deliverance.

When he knows that he needs divine help, he will frequently pray. And by much beseeching the heart becomes humble. For there is no man who is needy and asking, without being humble. And God will not despise a broken and contrite heart [1]). Until the heart has become humble, it will not rest from distraction. Humility restrains the heart. And as soon as man has become humble, mercy will surround and envelop him. And when mercy draws near, the heart will perceive help at once, because some confidence and force will also move in it. When it perceives that divine help approach unto it and that He is its support and its helper, then the heart will be filled with faith at once. Then it will see and understand that prayer is the port of help, the fountain of salvation, the treasure of confidence, the sheet-anchor amidst the storms, the light in the darkness, the stick of the weak, the shelter at the time of temptations, the medicine at the time of illness, the shield of protection in the battle, the sharp arrow against the enemies.

106 And because by prayer he has found the entrance unto all this good, he will delight in prayer of faith for ever more,

1) Ps. 51, 17

while his heart exults in confidence, not blindly and with words only, as it had been till then.

When he knows this, he possesses prayer as a treasure within his soul. And from joy he changes the tenor of prayer into sounds of thanksgiving. And the following word has been said by the sage among the saints, Mar Evagrius, who did every thing which he did with a purpose: Prayer is a joy that gives place to thanksgivings. Concerning this prayer, which takes place after receiving the knowledge of God, he says: This prayer that gives place [to thanksgiving], in which a man does not pray nor act as in the other passionate prayers which he prayed, perceiving grace, consists therein that in the heart, which is filled with joy and ecstasy, frequently emotions of thanksgivings and gratitude stir themselves, in the silence of kneelings. Then, on account of the inner ardour, which is set in motion by wonder at the understanding of God's bounties, he will of a sudden raise up his voice and praise without being wearied, while the inner ardour gives place to thanksgivings also of the tongue; and so he will give utterance [to his feelings] long and wonderfully. Who has experienced these things clearly, not dimly, and has noted them with intelligence, will understand when I say that it occurs without variation, for it has been experienced many times. And furthermore [such a man]
107 will leave idle things and be constantly with God, without a break, in constant prayer, fearing that he will be bereft of the current of its helping forces.

All these beautiful things are born from a man's perceiving his own weakness. For from this, because of his longing for help, he turns to God with beseechings. And as he brings near his spirit unto God, He comes nigh unto him with His gifts. And He does not take away from him His inspiration, because of his great humility. For as a widow unto the judge, he cries at all times: avenge me on my adversary. Therefore God, the merciful, necessarily will delay his petitions, that he have the better reason to approach unto Him. And because of his need he will constantly remain at the fountain of help, while God grants some of his demands quickly, others not: [He grants] those concerning which He knows that they are necessary for life, the rest He delays. And in some cases He withholds from him the ardour of his enemies, and in others He gives an opening to temptations, that this, as I have said,

should be a cause for approaching unto God, and that he should become prudent by temptations. And this is what is said in the scripture: The Lord left many peoples and He did not destroy them at once, nor did He give them into the hand of Joshua, in order to test Israel by them so that the generations of the children of Israel should learn war [1]).

108 As for the righteous who is not acquainted with his weakness, all his affairs are in peril. He is not far from falling, the destroying lion is not removed from him nor the demon of haughtiness. Who lacks knowledge of his weakness, lacks humility. Who lacks humility, lacks perfection. Who lacks perfection is still in a state of peril. And the enemy can attack him at every quarter, because his town is not fortified with iron bolts nor with a brazen lintel.

Neither is humility to be acquired except through the causes which bring about a continually broken heart and destroy the deliberations of presumption. Without humility the service of man cannot be sealed: the seal of the spirit has not yet been placed on the charter of his freedom, he is still a slave and his service cannot be established without his being made humble, neither can he acquire wisdom without temptations, neither can he reach humility without wisdom. Therefore God necessarily sends the saints things which cause humility and brokenness of heart and passionate prayer without distraction. Sometimes he afflicts them by accidents that arise from the natural affections or by transgressions arising from impure deliberations; sometimes by disdain or by idle oppressions which they have to endure from men, or by bodily pains; sometimes by poverty or need of necessary things; sometimes by vehement affections

109 of fear in the open war of the demons which He allows in order to keep them continually in motion, or by terrible varying states of which one is still more strong and sorrowful and hard than the other.

All these things happen, that man should have a reason for being humble, lest he should sleep in neglect either of things present from which the struggler suffers, or of fear of things to be. Therefore temptations will necessarily be profitable unto men. Now I do not say, that, in order to have a cause of humility, he ought to let loose his will unto evil

1) Cf. Judges 3, 1 sq.

things, with the purpose of humbling himself by the recollection of them, or that he should hasten unto other temptations. But it is beautiful for him that, apart from his performing good works, he should constantly spur himself and remember that he is a creature and naturally prone to be seduced. And whosoever is a creature, requires an external power, viz. to help him. And he who requires external help, the deficiency of his own nature is manifest. And every one who knows that he is deficient, to him humility is becoming in order to receive what he needs from Him who is able to give it.

If he knows all these things from the beginning and looks to them at all times, he will not sleep. And if he does not sleep, he will not be delivered into the hand of the powers which endanger his vigilance. Therefore it is becoming for him
110 that goes the way of God, that he confess and reproach and rebuke his soul for all [evils] that overtake him, knowing that either because of his negligence it is excited by the tempter by order of the Governor, or because he has exalted himself. Therefore he shall not leap up nor be shaken, but keep his soul quiet without accusation [of God], lest his evil be doubled. For there is not iniquity with God, on the contrary, He is the fountain of justice.

IX

ON SINS [COMMITTED] INTENTIONALLY AND WITH EVIL WILL, AND ON THOSE [COMMITTED] ACCIDENTALLY

There are sins in which a man is entangled through weakness and accidentally. And there are sins the source of which is the will; others [spring] from an uncultivated mind. Some are committed occasionally, others continually; others are customary. And all these classes and kinds of sins, though bound by the common verdict of reprehension, have a different character and their punishment may be greater or smaller.

Some sins are reprehended severely; others are near to mercy. God has also shown unto Adam, Eve and the serpent, though not one of them was exempted from receiving the retribution of his fault, a great variety in the curse which was directed

against each one of them; and so He did in the curses directed against their offspring. In accordance with the propensity and inclination of each unto sin, is judgment made more heavy.

111 If any one be not inclined to follow sin, but he be drawn towards it on account of neglect regarding righteousness, although he be not zealous for it, his judgment will be severe even if the connection with sin be difficult for him. But if he be diligent and temptations rise, mercy is near to purify him, without doubt. For it is another thing that a man who is careful regarding excellence and constant in its works, meditating on it even in the night, should fail in any of its duties; while by day he is loaded with its burden and goes around with it, all his thoughts concentrated upon justness — it is a different thing that, while he is occupied with such things, through ignorance or the compulsion of opposition on the way of excellence and the mighty waves that arise every moment in his limbs, and the propensity towards aberration which is implanted in him as a test of freedom, the indicator of his scale should point somewhat to the left, and through the sickness of the flesh he should be entangled in any kind of sin and suffer and be sorry on account of it and bewail himself passionately because of his miserable weakness in the face of what overtakes him now and then.

It is a very different thing, that one being lax in the works of righteousness or wholly neglectful of the way, should run like a slave in complete obedience to all the delights of sin, and try to find the means of its accomplishment; and that like
112 a slave he should purpose zealously to perform the will of his adversary, his limbs serving him as weapons on behalf of Satan in complete obedience and that he should not even think of repentance so as to draw nearer unto excellence and end his path of shortcomings.

Different are the trespasses and the stumbling-blocks laid on the way of virtue and in the course of righteousness. As the Fathers say: On the way of excellence there are stumbling-blocks, there are varying states, there is compulsion, and the like.

A different thing is death of the soul and complete destruction and total abandonment. This is known thereby that, although one falls, he does not forget the love of his Father; and although he is loaded with trespasses of every kind, his zeal for the service of good is not held back, nor does he

desist from his course, nor abhor to stand in struggle against these things anew and with the same chance of being vanquished, nor cease from demolishing every day his building and beginning a [new] foundation.

And the word of the prophet is in his mouth: Till the hour of my departure from this world, rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me [1]). And he will not cease to struggle till death. He will not allow himself to be vanquished, as long as there is breath in his nostrils. And though his ship is wrecked every day and the sweat of his commerce becomes a prey to the depths, he does not cease to borrow and fit out ships and navigate with good hope; till the Lord, seeing his zeal, has mercy for his shipwrecks and inclines unto
113 him in compassion and gives him strong impulses towards patience and towards braving the burning arrows of the Evil one. This is wisdom from God and whoever is sick in this way, is wise.

To abandon hope profits not. It is more expedient for us to be judged on account of special [sins] than on account of complete abandonment. Therefore the blessed commentator [2]) warns us against becoming weary in face of the many struggles and the frequent various kinds of strife to be met on the way of righteousness lest we should turn back and give our adversary the opportunity of a complete victory in any kind of evil. And so the blessed commentator says, arranging the strugglers as it were in classes: If you are truly zealous to look towards excellence and anxious for serenity of mind unto God, and to practise those things which are agreeable unto Him, you must necessarily bear for the sake of these things, all the struggles which will arise continually against you on account of the natural affections and the attractions of this world and the evil of the demons, without relaxing in spite of the constant and never ceasing strife, without fear of the tenacious vehemence of war, without dread of the hosts of enemies, and without dejection if it happen that you trespass somewhere and sin, but receiving on your faces the blows and wounds such as are [to be expected] in so great a war. On account of these things, therefore, you must not let yourself be moved

1) Micah 7, 8. 2) Theodore of Mopsuestia.

even from your will's decision; on the contrary you must maintain the choice of your behaviour, deeming it a beloved and
114 glorious thing to show yourselves in the war besmeared with the blood of your blows, without pausing in the slightest degree from strife against the enemies. These are the warnings of the blessed commentator.

Thus, it is not becoming in us to relax because of these things. Woe to the solitary who is unfaithful to his covenant and, treading down his conscience, gives Satan entrance into him, in small and great matters of sin, so that he does not find strength to defend against the enemies the breach [Satan] has made in his soul. And with what countenance will he behold the chaste, his companions, when they are brought together from whom he has separated his way to go the way of destruction, and the freedom of speech with God which the pious possess, and the prayer which arises from the chaste heart towards God and uplifts itself and even passes the hosts of the angels and stops not until it reaches God's majesty, holding the keys in its hands ceasing not until it has acquired its demand, returing unto the mouth that has sent it, with gladness. [And with what countenance will he look upon] what is harder than all these things, viz. that, as he has separated his way from them here, so Christ will separate him from them on that day. When the brilliant clouds will bear on their backs [1] the bodies that have become splendid by purification and that enter the great gate of heaven. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment [2], because their work is already judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous [2], in the resurrection before the judgment, nor the impure in the ranks of the saints.

1) Literally: hips
2) Ps. 1, 5

X

115 ON THE WORDS OF THE SCRIPTURES BEING SPOKEN AS IT WERE TO PATIENTS IN MODERATION LEST THEY SHOULD WHOLLY ABANDON THE LIVING GOD. BUT THIS SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN BY US AS A REASON FOR GREATER FREEDOM REGARDING SIN

The encouragement which our Fathers give us in their writings and the help towards repentance which is in the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles, should not be taken by us as a reason to disregard the threats of the divine acts of judgment, nor the punishment which God has decreed firmly against the trangression of the borders which should not be passed, through the mouth of all His saints and by means of all kinds of laws, in order to eradicate sins. As if the hope of repentance could be reason for us to strip from ourselves the feeling of fear in order to sin more freely and without dread. These [threats] are confirmed by the seals of the word of God, in all the scriptures of our salvation, and by the [divine] decrees fixed against them, [threatening] all kinds of terror. Some of these He has partly revealed to the many or to the few [people] by the punishments He brought upon them in order to show that He hated sin. Or why then were drowned in the Deluge the generations of the days of Noah? Was it not on account of the vileness of lasciviousness, because they had violated the
116 beauty of the daughters of Kain? In that time there was no love of money nor adoration of idols, nor sorcery, nor wars waged [by men] against one another.

Or again, why were five towns of the Sodomites for ever burnt? Was it not because they had given way to lust of the flesh, which had taken possession of them according to its good pleasure, consisting in all kinds of impurity? Was it not because of the fornication of one man that in Israel, the first-born of God, there fell twenty-five thousand by the plague in an instant? Why then was Simson rejected by God, Simson, the man of strength, the Naziraean from the womb, the sanctified to God, whose birth was announced by an angel like that of John the son of Zecharia, through whose hand [God] wrought marvels and signs, and who by the supernatural strength

which God infused into his body smote a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass and became a saviour and a judge unto Israel? Was it not because he made impure and defiled his hallowed limbs by intercourse with a harlot, that the Lord left him and gave him into the hands of his enemies? David, the heart of God, for whose excellence the promise made unto the righteous Fathers was carried out in his offspring from whom sprouted Christ the Saviour of the whole world — was it not by adultery with one woman and for the feebleness of one moment that from a glance of his eye he got an arrow in his soul and wrought evil against himself from within his own house; for the son which was to come forth from his loins was to pursue him?

And this happened although he showed repentance and the
117 Lord said to him: Also have I put away thy sin; thou shalt not die [1]), and he wept a flood of tears so that he moistened his bed during the nights.

I return to what I was saying before: Why then did distress and destruction hit the house of Eli the priest, the righteous old man, a priest and a judge of Israel during forty years? Was it not because of Pinehas and Hophni his sons who treated the women scornfully that came to pray in the tabernacle, though he himself did not sin, at any rate not wilfully, but only in so far as he was silent and reprehended with words only, without showing fervour against the fornication of his sons, so that the judgment of the Lord took revenge on them? And lest any one should think that the Lord shows His zeal only against those who are sinners in their lifetime, He also displays it against this audacious sin hated of Him, in the case of those who are near to Him, His priests and judges and the heads of the people and against those men who were holy unto Him and by whose hands He had done wonderful things, yet whom, when they violated the laws He had laid down, He did not spare. As is written in Ezechiel where He says to the man whom He orders to smite the people of Jerusalem with a hidden sword: Begin before my altar and do not spare, neither old man nor boy nor youth [2]): to show that it was the people near to Him, those who walked in fear
118 and chastity before Him and performed His will. The saints

1) Cf. 2 Samuel 12, 13 2) Ezekiel 9, 6

of the Lord and those near to Him are good works and a pure heart. But when they reject the ways of the Lord's will, He also rejects them and puts them away from before Him and takes His grace from them.

And why then did the judgment of the Exalted smite Belshazzar by the sign of the hollow hand? Was it not because he had behaved audaciously against the holy vessels which he had taken from Jerusalem and in which he drank with his concubines? And in the same way the judgment of the Exalted will of a sudden smite him who in abandoned audaciousness uses for worldly purposes the limbs that once were set apart for the holiness of the Lord, just as Belshazzar was smitten who behaved audaciously against the holy vessels taken from the sanctuary of the Lord.

Therefore we should not make use of the confidence in repentance and the heart-giving words of the scriptures as a motive for disregarding the words and the threats of the Lord and disdain Him by evil deeds, disdaining thereby also the limbs that once we have offered as a sacrifice for the ministration of His sanctuaries and for the use of His service.

Verily we are the sanctified of the Lord and the Naziraeans abstaining from women, as Elijah, Elisha and the prophets and the other sanctified Naziraeans and holy virgins by whose hands great and amazing things were done, who spake with God face to face; and as those who lived afterwards, John the virgin and the holy Simeon and the other preachers of
119 the New Testament who sanctified themselves to the Lord and received mystic secrets from Him, some from His own mouth, others by revelation. And so they became mediators between God and mankind, and the receptacles of His revelations and the preachers of the Kingdom to the inhabitants of the world.

XI

WHEREBY THE BEAUTY OF SOLITARY LIFE IS TO BE PRESERVED AND HOW IT CAN BE A CAUSE OF GOD'S BEING GLORIFIED

It is becoming for the solitary to be in every way a vision of stimulation unto those who look at him, so that because of the beauties which radiate from him on all sides as the rays

of the sun, even the enemies of truth unwillingly acknowledge that the Christians have a well-founded hope; and from every side they will flow to their place of refuge, and thus the head of the church will be elevated above its enemies.

Thus the glory of the solitary's deeds will be a stimulus for many to withdraw from the world. And [it is becoming] that he be reverenced by every one on account of his excellence, so that the mouth of the members of the church will be opened on his account and their head exalted above all creeds.

The pride of Christ's church consists in the behaviour of the solitaries. Therefore it is becoming to the solitary that the beauties of his habits shine on all sides; in the humble attitude of his limbs, in the simplicity of his habit, in his elevation
120 above visible things, in the veracity of his renunciation, in his rigorous fasting, in his being continuous silent, in the subduing of his senses, in the continence of his aspect, in his not being quarrelsome with other people for any reason, in the sparingness of his speech, in his being pure from rancour, in his discriminate conscious simplicity. And [it is becoming for him] that it be known that he is alien to this harmful and fleeting life and near to true and spiritual life, from his constantly being by himself, from his being unknown among men, from his not being tied to any one by the bonds of comradeship and intimacy, from his quiet dwellingplace, from the small space of his habitation, from his few and mean utensils, from his avoiding men, from his constant prayer, from his hating and avoiding honour, from his not being bound by temporal life, from his great patience, from his endurance in temptations, from his keeping aloof from rumours and from inquiries into worldly affairs, from his constant care for and meditation upon his true country, known by his sad countenance and his shrivelled face [1]), from his constantly weeping night and day, and above all from his cautious chastity and his freedom from covetousness in small and great things.

These are, in short, the manifest beauties of the solitary
121 which testify to his being wholly dead to the world and near unto God.

It is becoming for him to think of these things constantly in order to acquire them.

1) ܡܫܪܟܘܬܐ ܕܐܦܘܗܝ
Vesh. Abl. Lemarks 1922 (Wenzinck).

If any one asks: Wherefore are these lengthy descriptions necessary? I answer: they are very necessary. For if any one search for them, one by one, in himself, and if any fail him who cares for his life, he can ascertain from these distinctions his deficiency in any of the virtues. And thus these descriptions may become to him admonitions. And if he possess personally all the things described and also those omitted, the knowledge of them is given him [in this way] and so he will become a cause of God being praised among men and angels. And then he may prepare for his soul a place of rest before departing this world.

XII

THAT IT IS NOT BEAUTIFUL FOR THE SERVANT OF GOD WHO HAS RENUNCIATED THE WORLD AND HAS GONE FORTH TO SEEK EVEN THE TRUTH, OUT OF FEAR THAT HE SHALL NOT FIND THE TRUTH TO DESIST FROM SEEKING IT OR FROM THE FERVOUR WHICH IS BORN FROM THE DESIRE OF DIVINE THINGS, OR FROM THE INQUIRY AFTER THEIR MYSTIC SECRETS WHICH ARE DESCRIBED MYSTERIOUSLY. THAT, BY THIS SEEKING, THE MIND MAY DESIST FROM EVIL DISTRACTION AND RECOLLECTIONS OF THE AFFECTIONS

There are three degrees which constitute the whole course of man. The degree of novitiate, the middle one, and that of perfection.

122 And although the mind of the first degree looks with all its occupations and recollections towards excellence, yet it is connected with the affections.

The second degree, the middle one, lies between the affectable and the spiritual state. Righthand and lefthand deliberations are stirred equally in it. And neither the fountain of light nor that of darkness ever cease to flow on its side, as it has been said. If the [solitary] cease for even a short time from meditating restlessly on spiritual writings, or from thinking of divine things, such as enflame him as fire by their tending towards the truth, in union with outward heedfulness as strict

as possible which includes inward cautiousness and sufficient works — then he is swept away towards the side of the affections.

But if he heighten his natural warmth in the way mentioned, without desisting from seeking and inquiring, and if he follow these things from afar without seeing them, except their designation in the scriptures, and if he multiply his deliberations and dominate them by those which do not decline unto the left side, and receive not any seed of phantasies coming from the demons instead of from truth, but be desirous on the contrary, long and guard himself and beseech God in passionate, enduring prayer — then, as soon as it will please God to give it, He will open His gate before him. Especially on account of his humility, for to the humble the mysteries are revealed.

If he dies, however, in that expectation, without having seen that country at a short distance, I think that his heritage will be with the ancient righteous, who have expected perfection, according to the word of the Apostle, but have not seen it [1]),
123 yet have worked in expectation of it all their lifetime and have departed. But what shall we say, if any one does not reach [the degree which enables him] to enter the promised land which is the stage of the perfect and to find truth eye to eye in so far as nature is capable of this? Shall he then resign this [and remain] on that low stage which is wholly connected with that of the left side? And because he has not found the whole truth, shall he remain in this low state which does not even know to desire these things, or shall he elevate himself unto the middle stage mentioned, even though he does not look as it were in a mirror, but expects it from afar, and in that expectation will be gathered unto his fathers?

Even though he is not deemed worthy of the fulness of that grace here, yet he shall occupy his mind through intercourse with it at a distance and by its stimulating influence during his lifetime he shall eliminate and fly from bad deliberations. And in this hope, his heart being full of God, he shall depart this world.

All that takes place in humility, is beautiful. The uncorporeal thoughts of the mind inclining towards the love of God [engendered] by the understanding of the scriptures, are a

1) Cf. 1 Peter 1, 10—12.

fence for the gates of the soul against foreign deliberations. They guard the spirit by ardent recollections of future things, against its being distracted through idleness to the recollection of [worldly] things; this would quench the ardour of its emotion and it would fall into desires.

XIII

ON THE VARYING STATES WHICH COME TO THOSE WHO LIVE IN SOLITUDE, AS IS JUSTLY ORDERED BY GOD CONCERNING THIS [SPIRITUAL] WAY: NOW SADNESS AND PSYCHIC SUFFOCATION, THEN, SUDDENLY, GLADNESS AND JOY AND HOT FERVOUR AND UNUSUAL STRENGTH. PRAISE TO HIM THAT HAS ORDERED OUR WAY AMEN

To him who has determined to order his being in lonely dwelling and to pass the remainder of his days in service and in the ordering of the way of solitude, it will come to pass that, while he is as usual, in solitude, such as is justly prescribed by divine grace, his soul will be hidden in darkness. And just as the radiance of the sun is hidden from the earth by thick clouds, so, for a short time he is bereft from spiritual consolation and from the rays of grace, by the clouds of the affections; and some of the joy-giving force is withdrawn from him, while an unusual darkness falls upon his spirit; yet his mind is not troubled nor inclined towards dejection; but he remains patient, occupying himself with the writings of divine men and with prayers to which he forces himself, looking for help.

Then of a sudden it will be given him unexpectedly [1]). For, as the face of the earth is gladdened by the rays of the sun when the dense atmosphere is torn asunder, so the words of prayer are able to tear away and to remove from the soul the dark cloud of the affections and to gladden and to illuminate the spirit by the rays of joy and consolation which is born in our deliberations.

Especially when the soul is able to have recourse to the profit from the holy books and from vigils that make the mind pure. Constant meditation upon the holy scriptures will perpetually fill the soul with incomprehensible ecstasy and joy in God,

1) Literally: though he does not know it.

XIV

AS TO WHEN THOSE WHO LIVE IN SOLITUDE BEGIN TO KNOW, EVEN TO A SLIGHT EXTENT, HOW FAR THEY HAVE ADVANCED IN THEIR SERVICE IN THE UNFATHOMABLE SEA OF SOLITARY LIFE SO THAT THEY ARE ABLE TO HAVE CONFIDENCE SOMEWHAT ON THEIR LABOURS THAT THEY BEGIN TO BEAR FRUIT

I shall tell thee a thing at which thou must not laugh; for I tell the truth. Do not doubt it, for those from whom I have received it, are trustworthy.

If thou hangest on they eyelids before God, do not think that in behaviour thou hast reached anything till tears come forth; for thy hidden being still ministers unto the world. This means, that thou art on the same stage of behaviour with faithful lay people. For thou workest with thy outward man in the service of God but the inward man is still without fruits. His fruits begin at the point which I have indicated. When thou hast reached the place of tears, then understand that the spirit has left the prison of this world and set its foot on the way towards the new world. Then it begins to breathe the
126 wonderful air which is there, and to spend tears. For now the throes caused by the spiritual child, become vehement. And grace, the common mother, hastily delivers, as it were, the soul, God's image, unto the light of the world to-come. And when the time of birth is come, then the mind will perceive a something belonging to that world, like a faint perfume, which the child has received in the members into which it has grown.

But he who does not patiently bear what is unusual, will move his body with weeping mingled with joy which excels the sweetness of honey. Together with the growing of the child within there will be an increase of tears. The stream of tears begins when the spirit begins to become serene. I mean the flowing of tears belonging to the stage which I have described, not that partial one, which takes place from time to time.

This consolation which takes place from time to time, will come to pass to every one who serves God in solitude. Sometimes during spiritual contemplation. Sometimes when hearing or reading the words of the scriptures. Sometimes while occupied with beseechings.

But I propose to speak of that complete one, which continues night and day without a break, and which comes to him who has found truth in solitude by the sincerity of his behaviour, when the eyes become fountains of water for a period of nearly two years. This happens during a transition-period; I mean symbolical transition [1]). At the end of the period of tears thou wilt reach peace of deliberations; and by this peace of deliberations thou wilt reach the divine rest of which Paul speaks, rest in part, according to [our] nature.

From the beginning of [this period of] rest onward, the mind
127 will see hidden things. Then the Holy Ghost will begin to reveal unto it heavenly things, while God dwells in thee and promotes spiritual fruits in thee. Then thou wilt perceive the state which the whole nature will receive in the renewal of all things, dimly and mysteriously.

This I have written to the profit of myself and of every one who comes across this book, being that which I have attained by contemplation of the scriptures and from the mouth of veracious men (and to a small part by experience) that I also may gain profit by the prayers of those who have gained profit from these things, because I have toiled upon them.

Listen also to another thing which I tell thee, as I have heard it from a mouth that does not lie: As soon as thou hast entered this place where the deliberations are set at peace, then the violence of weeping is again taken from thee and thou reachest the state of moderation.

This is the exact truth in a few words; and it is true and confirmed by the whole church, by the excellent among her sons and by her chief protagonists.

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1) ܡܥܒܪܬܐ ܐܪܙܢܝܬܐ

XV

ON THE COURSE OF THE SOLITARY CAREER, SUCCINCTLY AND WITHOUT PROLIXITY. AND ON THE QUESTION HOW AND AT WHAT TIME ITS VIRTUES ARE BORN ONE FROM THE OTHER

Lucidly and distinctly, the course of virtues shows itself so. From works performed by compulsion, in solitude there is 128 born a blazing and immeasurable heat, which is generated in the heart by fervent deliberations, newly born in the spirit.

Works and watchfulness polish the mind by their heat and give it sight. And sight gives birth to the fervent deliberations mentioned, because of the depth of psychic sight which is called contemplation.

Contemplation gives birth to fervour; from this fervour sight given by grace is born; and then outbursts of tears begin. At first partial ones; this means that a man's tears will flow several times every day. Then he will come to [the state of] tears without a break. Through the tears the soul receives peaceful deliberations. From peaceful deliberations it rises unto serenity of insight. And by serenity of insight a man reaches the sight of hidden things. For purity is brought about by being free from war.

And after these the mind will reach that which is denoted by the symbol of the brook in Ezekiel the prophet [1]), a symbol which contains the type of those three psychic stages which are near to divine things and of which the third is the utmost which a man can reach.

The beginning of all these is a good will unto God and various works in solitude and that uprightness which is born from severe reclusion from the world.

It is not necessary to enumerate the distinctions between the works, for they are known to every man. But as soon as any one occupies himself with them it is not possible that he deteriorate; I know, on the contrary, that he will profit by

1) Ez. 47

129 them. They are the following: the work of hunger, of reciting, waking during the night, according to every one's strength; frequent prostrations, several times in the day and often during the night. Some will perform thirty prostrations at one time, salute [the cross][1]) and go away from it. Some will perform even a greater number. Others will prolong prayer during three hours and stay in concentration while prostrated, without compulsion and without distraction.

These two varying states show the great richness of grace, which works in various ways with every man according to his measure, be it that he multiplies the number [of his prayers] on account of his fervent ardour, be it that he acquires quiet in his soul so that he reduces to one the large number of his former prayers.

As to the question of the cause of that other prayer and its duration without compulsion, it seems to me that it is not becoming for us to treat such things in detail, by describing their nature in speech or writings lest the reader, being unable to understand anything of it, should judge it to be something insipid; or, if he should be acquainted with these things, should despise him who is not able to cross the border of certain things. From the one blame, from the other laughter would be the consequence; and thus I would become a barbarous writer to such ones, according to the word of the apostle
130 concerning him that speaks in prophecies[2]).

But he who is desirous to know these things should know that their course has been described above. He may combine works with deliberation, by the grace of our Lord. And what practically happens in these states he may experience personally.

Stay therefore in thy cell and the cell will teach thee everything.

1) Cf. p. 140
2) Cf. 1 Cor. 14

XVI

HOW PROFITABLE IT IS FOR THE SOUL WHILE IN SOLITUDE TO BE FREE FROM WORKS AND HOW INTERCOURSE HARMS THE MIND OF THE NOVICE WHICH HAS BUT LATELY BEGUN TO HAVE INSIGHT FOR ITSELF AND HOW IT IS CLEAR THAT BODILY WORKS NECESSARILY BRING ABOUT IN THE SOLITARY A DEFICIENCY IN DIVINE WORKS

That a man who is beset with care, should be quiet and in a state of peace, is impossible. For the necessary things which cohere with those things upon which he expends his labour, cannot but have the effect that he be shaken; and they will bereave him of his rest and quiet. For the only opportunity for Satan to enter the soul is distraction. Therefore it is becoming for the solitary to place himself constantly before God's face and to look for His will [1]), if it be his intention to keep his mind in watchfulness and if it be his will grasp quickly the small deviations as soon as they begin to stir in him, and, in peace of spirit, learn to recognise what passes in him [2]).

131 Frequent oscillations are a sign of the solitary's relaxation as to the preparation of Christ's service, and they are signs of deficiency in divine things.

Without being free [from cares] thou canst not demand lucidity from thy soul; nor rest and quiet if the senses are set free; nor concentration of the senses when the oscillations of practice [are frequent].

Keep thy self free from accidents; then thou wilt find no trouble in thy mind.

Without constant beseechings it is not possible to be near to God. And to think of other things at the same time with the work of beseechings, is distraction of the heart.

If fervent emotions befall thee sometimes when thou tastest God in the hot fire of divine things, but when thou seekest them again thou findest them to have become insipid and cold

1) ܪܡܙܐ 2) Literally: those who go in and out.

within thyself, [this is because] the distraction of intercourse with men has assailed thee somewhere, or because thou hast estimated bodily work above them, and on account thereof the fervour of thy deliberations has become cold. Tears, however, and beating the head [on the ground] during prayer, and fervent self-humiliations quicken again their warm sweetness in the heart. And in lauded madness the heart will fly after God, crying: My soul thirsteth for thee, the living God: when shall I come and see thy face[1]? He that has tasted this wine and has been bereft of it, he only knows in what a torment he has been left and what has been taken from him on account of his relaxation.

O, how evil is the sight of men and intercourse with them
132 for him that lives in solitude, especially him that is relaxed and left alone[2]. Verily, my brethren, as a strong blast of cold, that suddenly hits the buds of the trees and nips their small heads germinating from the twigs, so intercourse with men, even though it be short and in a congregation with a good purpose, withers the sprouts of the virtues which have but lately shown their heads because of the good air[3] of solitude, and which beset with their humidity the tree of the soul, planted by the brooks of repentance. And as the sharpness of the cold strikes the new sprouts of the roots, destroying and pushing back their heads into the earth, so intercourse with men destroys the root of the mind which but begins to grow green by reason of the herbs of virtues, thrusting them back to their original place and destroying their tenderness. And if intercourse with those who are nearly master of themselves is so obnoxious to the soul, be it only on account of their hindering the customary service, this must happen to a larger extent if a man speaks with and sees stupid and uncultivated men or even lay people, which has the effect of fire upon small wood. And as the humility of an honourable and estimable man, who forgets himself frequently by drinking wine, is troubled and his honour stained and his chastity shaken by the foreign deliberations which dominate his spirit on account of the force of the wine, so the chastity of the soul is shaken by intercourse
133 with and sight of men; and it forgets the aim of its watchfulness and is bereft of the whole intention of its will; and

1) Ps. 42, 2 2) viz. by grace 3) literally: the mixture of the air

intercourse and recreation and the use of luxury eradicate from its depth the whole foundation of laudable behaviour.

And even if a man be silent and only in the presence of such men in person, hearing and seeing, the mere fact that the doors of his eyes and his ears let in [what is seen and heard], is able to turn his spirit from divine things and to trouble it greatly.

If thus the mere sight of men and the bare hearing of their speech for only a small time is able to cause so much harm to the solitary who is watchful, what then shall we say about regular meetings or about those of a longer duration?

The vapour rising from the stomach obscures [1]) the knowledge of divine things, as the inhalations rising from the damp earth obscure the face of the sun [2]).

Haughtiness does not understand that it proceeds in darkness without knowing insight and wisdom. In its own thoughts it is elevated above all things, but it is poorer and lower than any thing. It is unable to know the ways of God, and the Lord will hide His will from it, because it does not like to go in the way of the humble.

XVII

ON THE SHORT PATHS TOWARDS GOD WHICH ARE REVEALED TO ONE FROM THE SWEET WORKS IN VIGILS AND THAT THOSE WHO ARE GIVEN TO VIGILS ARE SUPPORTED BY HONEY THEIR WHOLE LIFETIME

Do not think, O man, that among all the works of asceties there is any one greater and more profitable than that of vigils. In truth, my brethren, if during the day the ascetic is not distracted by corporeal things and temporal care, but cuts himself off somewhat from the world, and is watchful to even a low degree during vigils, then I do not object to declare unto you in truth, that soon his spirit will fly as with wings and ascend unto God to be in delight. And he will easily look at that glory, and in that knowledge which is higher than

1) In one Ms. only. 2) See p. 83

human spirit he will quickly swim. The solitary who during his vigils abides by the discernment of the mind, will no longer seem to be clad with flesh. Verily, this work belongs to the class of the angels. And it is impossible that those who applicate themselves to this behaviour, should be left without great divine gifts, on account of the vigilance and serenity of their heart, and because their deliberations tend to Him only.

The soul, therefore, which applies itself in its labours to the duty of vigils, becomes trained, and acquires Cherubs' eyes in the swiftness and acuteness of their gaze, so that at all times it gazes on heavenly contemplations.

I am of the opinion that he who on account of vaste know-
135 ledge and with discernment has chosen for himself this great and divine work, and is wholly devoted to bear the load of the glorious part he has chosen, will necessarily be zealous to guard himself also during the day against the trouble of occupations and of care for [worldly] things, and that he consequently will not be devoid of wonderful fruits and the great delight he will gather from them. And I may say deliberately, without lying, that he who despises this, does not even know for what purpose he performs all this toil: the loss of sleep, the many repetitions, the fatigue of the tongue, the standing on his feet during the whole night, while his mind is not there where he recites his Psalms and prayers; but he performs these works as a matter of custom, as something which is devoid of discernment. And if this were not as I say, how could he suffer to be bereft of and to remain without reaping profitable fruits from the constant occupation with his work? But he strives towards these [results] through the holy occupation of the recitation of the scriptures, which is a fortification of the mind and, principally, a cause[1] of prayer, a helper and a companion of vigils, a light of the mind, a guide on the way and the seed[2] of manifold contemplation during prayer. It is a check against the distraction of the spirit and against its occupying itself with idle things. It sows in the soul constant recollection of God and [of] the ways of the saints who have pleased Him. And it causes the mind to acquire wisdom and subtlety.

Wherefore then, O zealous man, doest thou order thy occu-

1) ܫܩܝܐ 2) literally: the sower

136 pations in this way, without discernment? For thou showest care for thyself in that thou standest upon thy feet during the whole night, fatiguing thyself with glorifications and Psalms and prayers. It would be easy for thee, by little watchfulness during the day, to be made worthy of the divine grace for thy strenuous efforts in other duties. Wherefore doest thou fatigue thyself and sow in the night, whereas during the day thou renderest useless thy works so as to lose the fruits, dissipating this vigilance and fervour which thou wouldst acquire by vigils, through the distraction of intercourse with men and through different occupations, and destroying thy profit by wandering idleness?

If thou wouldst associate to thy nightly meditation, o man, service during the day without breaking in twain the fervour of the occupations of the heart, thou wouldst quickly embrace Jesus' bosom.

And from this thou seest that thou sufferest for lack of discernment. For thou doest not perceive why vigils are necessary for the ascetic. Thou thinkest it is for the sake of toiling only, and not in respect of another thing which is expected to be born from it.

But he that by grace has almost been made worthy of understanding that for which the sages hope in combating sleep and compelling nature to such a degree that during the whole night, awake bodily and mentally, they offer prayers — also knows the strength given by watchfulness during the day and the profit it grants the spirit in its nightly solitude while 137 at its vigils with discernment, and the power it supplies over the deliberations and the purity [1]) and concentration with which it endows the mind, so that without compulsion and strife the spirit gazes at the greatness of the words [recited].

I say this also, that though the body may fall short in the work of fasting on account of its great weakness, yet vigils, by their lonely character, afford the mind steadfastness in prayer, and enable the heart to recognize spiritual powers by means of insight. This can only take place if it is not assailed by any disturbance through relaxation caused by things met during the day.

Therefore I admonish thee, o man of insight who wishest to acquire vigilance of mind in God and knowledge of the

1) Reading of some Mss.

new life, that during thy lifetime thou mayest not despise this duty [1]) of vigils, by which thy eyes will be opened so as to see the whole glory of ascetic work and the power of the way of righteousness.

And if it should happen — unfortunately — that a thought of relaxation should make its nest in thee, and thou shouldst think, on account of [previous] experience, that thy usual helper is training thee and making thee prudent by means of varying states, such as coldness and heat, or by variety of chance and occasion, or on account of thy body being ill or weak; and if this should induce thee to forego sleep in the evening, though thou shouldst not be willing to fatigue thy body — then I beseech thee with love to desist from all this zealous labour, the reciting of Psalms, the performing of the service, the fre-
138 quent kneelings during regular praying. I advice thee to sit in solitude, awake, if thou art able to do this, without recitation of Psalms and without prostrations. And if thou art able to do so, pray with thy heart only. But do not sleep. And by all means pass thy night, sitting, in the usual beautiful meditation. Only — do not make thy heart heavy [2]) and dark by sleep. Then the old swiftness and force and fervour will be given thee by grace and thou wilt rejoice and exult and thank God. For such heaviness and coldness [3]) are admitted unto man in order to test him.

If a man rouse himself fervently and shake off and cast away [despondency], compelling himself somewhat, suddenly grace will approach as before. And another force will impart itself to him, in which ten thousand [gifts of] grace and profitable states are hidden. And man will be astonished while thinking of the former heaviness and the swiftness and strength following it, and of how such a state of a sudden has overcome him.

Therefore he will be prudent henceforth, so that, when this heaviness comes again at other times, he will recognize it. But if he had not been daring on former occasions, he would not have acquired this knowledge.

Thou seest how prudent a man becomes if he rouse himself a little and if he be valiant at the time of struggle. But when

1) ܕܘܒܪܐ 2) Literally: thick.
3) Reading ܩܪܝܪܘܬܐ with the London Mss.

his nature really subsists only and no longer struggle, but sickness or natural weakness, it is useless to resist. If a man compel himself in other points, strength in all things will be given him.

139 Constant solitude, with recitation and moderate food, easily arouse in the spirit a state of ecstasy [1]), if perpetual solitude be not broken for any cause. Insight brought about by works performed in solitude, will of itself, automatically and suddenly, impart to these two eyes a kind of baptism, by tears which burst forth and moisten the cheeks by their profuseness.

If thou perceivest in thy body, humbled by the asceticism of watchful solitude, the vehement passion of fornication, — not the usual dark impulse of nature, — know then that thou art tempted in thy spirit by haughtiness. Mix thy food with ashes, press thy belly against the dust and scrutinize what thou hast thought. And recognize the varying states of thy nature and thy service which is above thy nature. Perhaps God will have mercy upon thee and send thee light so that thou wilt know how to be humble, lest thy evil become greater.

So we will not desist from carefulness, till repentance dawns in our heart and we find humility and our heart finds rest in God.

XVIII

THINGS WHICH I HAVE HEARD FROM OLD MEN AND STORIES OF HOLY PEOPLE, THEIR PIOUS WORDS AND WONDERFUL BEHAVIOUR. MAY GOD PRESERVE US BY THEIR PRAYERS AMEN

One day I went to the cell of a holy brother and lay down
140 in a corner as I was ill, expecting that he would visit me for God's sake. There was nobody in that country [whom I knew]. I had seen this brother several times at night, as he stood, a long time ago. He usually woke for the service earlier than any of the brethren. Then he would begin with Psalms and would recite them diligently. Then, of a sudden, he would leave the service, fall on his face, and beat, so to speak a hundred times, with his head on the earth violently and quickly, on

1) ܬܗܪܐ ܕܥܠ ܨܒܘܬܐ amazing attitude regarding things

account of the fervour which grace had kindled in his heart. Thereupon he would rise and salute the cross. Then again he prostrated himself, rose, saluted the cross and again fell down on his face. This he repeated so many times that I was not able to count them. Who could have counted the many kneelings which that brother performed these nights?

He would also approach the cross and kiss it twenty times, full of reverence and of fervour, in love mingled with fear; thereafter he continued his reciting of Psalms. From time to time, when he was no longer able to bear that flame of joy, he was suddenly overwhelmed by frequent currents of deliberations, which kindled him with their fervour; and he would elevate his voice because he could not restrain himself.

And I was astonished at the grace which was with that brother and I wondered at his zeal and alacrity in the works of God.

141 After the morning service, when he sat down for recitation, he was like one in the state of rapture. At every verse he recited he would fall on his face several times; and at many of the words he would stretch his hands towards heaven and utter the glorification several times.

He was a man of middle age, nearly forty years old. He ate but little; his temperament was dry and hot. And because he compelled himself, when his body could not bear it, he looked like a shadow from time to time, so that one pitied him on account of his thin face, which was vanishing and becoming as small as two fingers. Several times I said to him: moderate this strict rule of behaviour, my brother, and this beautiful way which thou treadest and do not disorder nor break thy rule as a spiritual chain, out of desire to add a small quantity of works with the result that thy whole course will be brought to a close. Eat moderately, but eat regularly. And make not thy way too long for thy strength, lest thou shouldst have to desist from it wholly.

Further he was compassionate and very bashful, he was glad to show compassion. He was honest by nature and easily persuaded, and prudent in God. Because of his honesty and joyous disposition he was liked by every one and they all loved him. He worked with all the brethren in clay in their cells, when

142 they had any, now for three, now for four days; every evening he returned to his own cell, till the work of the brother was finished. He was very well skilled in this work.

If he possessed any thing, and one of the brethren begged him to give it him, he gave it him even though he was in great need of it [1]. He was very sensitive before all sorts of persons and was not able to say: I have not, or: I want it myself. And that he regularly left his cell to work with the brethren, was because of his sensitiveness before others; so he compelled himself, although not inclined to go out. And several times he spoke to me about his aversion to leave his cell. This was the divine behaviour of that wonderful brother.

Concerning another solitary [2]. Once I went to the cell of an old solitary, an excellent man who loved me greatly. He was somewhat quaint in his words, but illuminated in his thoughts and profound. And what he choose to tell, he spoke with a certain goodheartedness. He scarcely left his cell, except for the holy mysteries [3]. He was constantly concentrated and in solitude.

Once I said to him: Father, I purpose going on Sunday and sitting down in the galery of the church and to eat early in the morning. Then every visitor will see and despise me. The solitary said to me: It is written: He who offends the lay people, will not see light. Nobody knows thee in these regions, neither do people know what thy fame is. So they will say: The solitaries eat early in the morning. There is a
143 greater reason. There are novices of weak deliberations, many of whom will be edified by thee now; but if they see thee [eating], they will turn back. The ancient Fathers could do such things, because of the signs and the forces which were wrought through them and because of the great name and fame they possessed. These things they practised, each of them in order to be despised and blamed, and to obscure the fame of his behaviour and to keep far from him the cause of haughtiness. But what is the necessity for thee to act in this way? Doest thou not know that even for the behaviour [of solitaries] moderation is necessary and a fixed time for every one of their works? But what necessity is there for thee regarding such things? Thou doest not follow a distinct discipline, nor art thou famous. Thou hast the same discipline as the other brethren. Therefore, thou doest not gain profit for thyself by doing so, but thou art harmful for others.

1) Translation according to the London Mss. 2) ܣܒܪܐ 3) The Eucharist

And this behaviour [1]), is not profitable for all men, but for the great and perfect only, because it involves relaxation of the senses. For the novices and those of the middle state however it is very harmful. For they, on the contrary, need watchfulness and subduing of the senses. For the trained solitaries have passed [the period of] watchfulness, as has been said, and mix with what they like, yet know to gain profit. A simple merchant will lose greatly in great affairs; in small ones he often easily comes forward. Therefore, as I have said,
144 in all work moderation is necessary; and every discipline has its fixed time. Every one who, before its time, begins with what is above his rank, will be injured and gain no profit.

If thou desirest this, first suffer that disdain which Providence sends thee without thy willing it, gladly, without being troubled thereat and without hating those who disdain thee.

Concerning another solitary. Once I was in intercourse with the virtuous one that had tasted from the tree of life in the sweat of his soul, from the morning of youth until the evening of old age. And after much conversation in which he taught me concerning excellence, he also said this to me: Every prayer, in which the body does not participate and by which the heart is not affected, is to be reckoned as an abortion without a soul.

Further he said to me: Have not the slightest intercourse with any man who strives after victory in his words, and is astute in spirit and of keen senses, lest thou destroy the serenity thou hast acquired by works and thy heart become full of darkness and trouble. —

Once I went to the cell of one of the Fathers. This saintly man scarcely ever opened to any one. When he saw from his window that it was I, he said: Thou wishest to enter? I said to him: Ay. When I had entered and we had prayed and sat down and he had spoken with me concerning many things, I asked him at last: What shall I do, my lord? There are persons who constantly visit me, without my profiting by their inter-
145 course. To forbid them to enter would be painful to me. They often hinder me even in my usual service. But I am not able to say so to them openly. So I am much troubled by this matter.

1) Assuming the habits of sin

This blessed man said to me: When such people visit thee, people who like to be lazy and who spread [1] idle words, and when they have sat down a little time, assume the air that thou desirest to stand for service. And say to [thy visitor], whosoever he be, with an obeisance: My brother, we will perform the service. For the time of my service is come and I may not overlook it. For it would be hard for me to combine it with the next prayer: that would cause me trouble: and I may not omit any service without [the plea of] necessity. At present there is no necessity to let the time pass. — This shalt thou urge till he stand up with thee for the service. And if he say: Perform thou thy service, now I will go away — make an obeisance before him and say: Be kind to me and perform with me this single service, that I may be helped by thy prayer. Then, when he agrees and you are standing, make thy service longer than usually. So thou shalt do with them as often as they enter. And when they see that thou art not of their kind and that thou doest not love idleness, then they will no more come where they hear that thou art. Behold, thou shalt be no respecter of persons and neglect none of the works of God.

If, however, [thy visitor] be one of the Fathers, or a foreign
146 brother who is fatigued, then deem it an important service to remain in intercourse with him. But if this stranger also should be one of those who love idle words, content him as much as thou canst and dispatch him quickly.

Once one of the saints said to me: When I hear, that there are people who perform work in their cell and also accomplish the rules of the cell without failure, I wonder how it is possible that they are not troubled.

He also said a wonderful thing: verily, I say that even when I go to make water, this troubles my constancy [of mind]; because practice turns away from me the complete discernment which I have mastered.

A solitary asked a brother: What shall I do? Often I desire a thing and am in need of it on account of illness, or work, or some other reason, so that by its aid I would nigh well be able to lead a life of solitude. But if I see anyone who needs this thing as I do, then compassion causes me to give it him.

1) حقوم

Or if any one asks me for this thing, I am pressed by love and by command so that I give it him. But afterwards I require this thing. And my need causes me care and disturbance and troubled thoughts, and it takes away my concentration of spirit and my care for the usual service of solitude. So that I am
147 compelled many times to leave my solitude and go and ask for this thing. And when I restrain myself from going out, I am in great need and perturbance of mind. On account of this thing I am constantly shaken and disturbed without knowing which of the two I shall choose: that which destroys and disturbs my peace for the sake of the peace of my neighbours; or to abandon this, so as to remain in solitude and renunciation, and to care for the small things of my self only, without any inclination to think many thoughts or to care for others.

I beg to learn, in answer to this, what is good and worthy of recommendation. The solitary answered saying: All compassion is either love, or alms, or a gift. And every becoming thing, and every deed reckoned as being godly which destroys thy solitude and bereaves thee of thy freedom regarding the world, and causes thee care and troubles thy thoughts concerning divine things, and breaks the order of thy prayers and brings about troubled deliberations and takes from thee the concentrated occupation with recitation and freedom from distraction, and destroys thy watchfulness and makes thee instead of a prisoner one who walks where he likes and [changes] thee from a solitary into one who mingles [with other people] and awakens in thee buried passions and relaxes the asceticism of thy senses and quickens thee again who wert dead to the world and casts thee out of thy angelic service which is concentrated solitary thought, and sets thy part with the service of the laity — this [sort of] righteousness may perish. To accomplish alms of love to thy neighbour, consisting in bodily
148 comfort, belongs to the service of lay-people, or of those solitaries who are inferior to service in solitude or practice a mingled solitude in the company of one another and through constant visits [1]. — But those solitaries who have earnestly chosen to be free from the world in body and in spirit in order to establish in their mind the prayer of solitude which is the being dead to the things that perish and to all thought

1) literally: entering and departing

of practice and seeing and recollecting [worldly] things, they do not serve Christ by any service in these bodily things or with a righteousness founded upon manifest deeds with the intermediation of persons in order to be justified thereby, but [they serve Him] by mortifying their members which are upon the earth [1]), according to the word of the Apostle, offering at all times the pure sacrifices of their thoughts as the first fruits of their service and their bodily affections through patience in trouble for the sake of that which they expect. The behaviour of the solitaries is like that of the angels. So it is not just to neglect the service of heavenly things and to gather righteousness by [practising] earthly things.

A brother was blamed because he provided the wants of the poor from his own possessions. He answered proudly: Solitaries are near to alms. He that blamed him said: Well known is the solitary who is not near to alms; who without shame can say to our Lord, as has been said: Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee [2]). This is he that does not possess any-
149 thing on the earth, nor does he perform bodily labour for earthly things, his thoughts do not turn to any of the visible things in the world, nor does he expect to acquire anything. If any one offers anything to him, he only accepts according to his want; he never looks at aught else. But he is in his dealings like a bird, the which does not think of giving alms; for he has a service more excellent than alms.

How can he give others from that of which he is liberated? But as long as a man works with his hands and receives from others, he is also obliged to give alms. To neglect this would be a manifest transgression of God's commandment. But if he does not make progress with God in hidden things, and does not know to serve God in spirit and despise the manifest things which lie within his power, what further hope has he to acquire life? Be he anathema.

ADMONITION OF ONE OF THE FATHERS CONCERNING THE RIGHT SOLITUDE

I wonder at those who trouble themselves in their course of solitude because they desire to comfort others by bodily things.

1) Colossians 3, 5 2) Matthew 19, 27

He also said: It is not becoming to mingle with the service of solitude the thought of any thing in the world, safe only those which it is possible to perform in solitude. And we have to honour every solitary performance in its place, lest we become confuse in our solitary course. For he who cares about
150 many things, is a slave of many persons. He who lets go all and cares for the steadfastness of his soul, is a friend of God. Behold, those who practise alms and completely show their love of neighbours by bodily things, are many in the world. But those who beautifully serve in solitude and have intercourse with God are scarcely to be found. Or who are, among those who practise righteousness and gain it by earthly things, those from whom we may receive one of the gifts which those who work in solitude receive from God?

The same has further said: If thou art a lay man, practise the behaviour which suits lay people. But if thou art a solitary, gain profit by the labours by which the solitaries gain profit. If, however, thou wilt practise both, thou wilt fall short in both. The work of solitaries is this: to become liberated from sensible things and to be constantly with God in the thoughts of the heart and through fatiguing the body by prayer. Judge thou thyself whether it be possible to despise these things and to fill their place with worldly excellence. Or should a solitary be able to practise in solitude two kinds of behaviour, the outward and the inward one viz. meditation on God and burdening his heart with the care of others? I say even this that he who has honestly willed to lead a life with God, and leaves all, fixing his attention solely upon matters of behaviour — that even he will not be able to accomplish without shortcomings
151 all the duties of the practice of solitude. He is found wanting in the bearing of his load, though he desists absolutely from the use and the care of the world — not to mention the case of his being occupied by many other thoughts.

To our Lord are given[1]) those who administer and visit His servants and His sons. He has also chosen those who minister before Himself.

We do not only see, in the affairs of earthly kings, that those who are constantly with the king and participate of his secrets are more glorious and elevated in their ranks than those

1) ܫܒܝܩܝܢ

who accomplish their outward affairs with love, but, also in divine affairs, it is easy to see what a freedom of speech those possess who, in intercourse with Him possess the mysteries of prayer at all times; and over what riches of heaven and earth they reign, and how apparent is their mastership over all created natures, which, without dispute, obey their words as those of God. They are stamped with the manifest sign of His image, with a glory greater than that of all rational and irrational [1]) beings, greater than that of those who serve God with possessions and earthly things and seek to content Him in [the company of] their companions. This may be very beautiful, but as to us, we have not to take as examples those who stand at a low degree in the service of God, but those who are athletes in our path [2]) and the saints who go our course, and those who once for all have given up and turned their back on the earth and have taken hold of the vault of heaven.

Whereby have the ancient saints pleased God, those who
152 have trodden the way of our behaviour and have excelled: the holy John of Thebais, that treasury of excellence and fountain of prophecy? Did he comfort his companions with bodily things, in his reclusion, or did he please God by prayer? I confess that there have been [solitaries] who also in these things pleased [God] and gained profit. But they are less in number than those who pleased God by prayer and by renouncing all things. What their help to their fellowbrethren who live in solitude is, is well known. It consists in helping them as often as they are in want of a profitable word or [in helping them] by offering prayer in behalf of them. Apart from these things, it is not wise for him who dwells in solitude to give place in his heart to recollections or thoughts concerning any one as far as bodily things are concerned. 'Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's [3]) and what belongs to a neighbour is his, and what belongs to God is His' does not apply to those who dwell in solitude, but to those who walk without. It is not the duty of him who performs the service of the angels with the thoughts of the soul, to please in earthly things; namely to have thought

1) Literally: speaking and mute.
2) In the sense of: mystic course, سُرْيَة
3) Matthew 22, 21

for manual work or to taking from others and giving to others. His service is in heaven.

It is not becoming for the solitary to allow the thought of anything to move and drive away his spirit from before God. If, however, anyone dare to adduce the example of Paul, who
153 also performed [manual] work and also gave alms, we reply to him: Paul was unique and a master in all things. We know not that another Paul has ever existed who was a master in all things like him. Show it me, if thou art found to be another Paul, and I will believe thee. Do not, therefore, compare the matters of government with the inner practice. For the work of the heralds is different from that of solitude.

But if thou wilt master solitude, be like a Cherub who has no care for earthly things. And think that there is no other man in the created world, excepted thee alone, and God about whom thou thinkest, as thy Fathers who have gone the way before thee, have taught thee. Unless a man harden his heart and restrain his compassion forcibly so as to be far from the thought of any man, should it be for the sake of God or of any bodily being — but he shall only be in prayer, at the times appointed to him, lest love or care of anyone enter his heart — it is not possible for him to be freed from the trouble of thought or to be in solitude. So much is certain. But when a deliberation is awake in thee, urging thee to the thought of anyone under the pretext of excellence, the purpose of which is to drive away from thee the peace that was becoming customary to thy heart through the recollection of God, then say to it: it is beautiful to lead a life of love and compassion for the sake of God, but I do not seek it, even for the sake of God, so it only remains to me to drive thee away for the sake of God. Thus the solitary will speak. Then the deliberation
154 will say to him: And I flee from thee for the sake of God.

Aba Arsenius, for the sake of God, did not open his mouth to speak, neither profitable nor gratuitous words. Another, however, for the sake of God, spoke the whole day and received all the strangers that visited that place. The former, in stead of this, chose silence and solitude.

Thus he voyaged with the spirit of God on the ocean of this world in the ship of solitude, in exalted peace, as is shown in revelation to the athletes who investigate this thing.

This is another denomination of solitude: rest from all

things[1]). If thou art full of trouble even in solitude, because thy body is troubled by manual service and various affairs, and because thy soul is troubled by the thought of others, what peace doest thou possess then to care for many things and to please God? Judge thyself. It appears to me ridiculous to talk about mastering the course of solitude without abandoning all things and the care of all things.

XIX

ON THE REVELATIONS AND POWERS WHICH HAPPEN TO THE SAINTS IN IMAGES

The degree of revelation is not the same as that a man deepen his emotions by the study of wisdom and by intellectual labour so as to arrive at some understanding and contemplation
155 of anything by mental investigation. For it is said: Revelation is silence of intellect. And by zealous efforts and human thoughts no one can imagine that he has found knowledge; this happens by spiritual power so that he to whom the revelation is imparted, at that time is not aware of any thought of his soul nor of those things which present themselves to his senses; neither does he use them nor is he acquainted with them.

This we do not assert on our own authority, but it can be proved sufficiently from the writings of the prophets, who, when revelations happened to them, did not perceive any of the usual things nor could they use their thoughts at will nor had they any sensual apperceptions, because they were in ecstasy. Their mind was wholly concentrated upon those things which appeared to them during the revelation. As it happened to the blessed Peter when he was hungry and ascended unto the roof in order to pray: when the revelation began, he did not perceive his hunger. Even the recollection of food was effaced from his mind, because he was in ecstasy, as scripture says[2]).

Concerning all these things one may be well instructed in particulars from the writings of the blessed bishop Theodore, the light of the whole world[3]). For he speaks about the kind

1) ܥܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܟܠ
2) Acts 10, 10 3) Theodore bishop of Mopsuestia

and the rank of revelations, especially in the three volumes on
156 Genesis and in the two volumes on Job and in the last one about the Twelve Prophets, and in the commentaries on the Acts and the Gospel of Matthew.

Scripture mentions six kinds of revelations. The first: that by the senses. The second: by psychic sight. The third: by rapture [1]) of the spirit. The fourth: by the rank of prophecy. The fifth: in some intellectual way. The sixth: as it were by a dream.

Revelations by the senses are divided into two different kinds: those which take place by means of the elements and those which take place without matter. Examples of the former kind are the revelation in the thornbush, in the cloud, in the tables and so on, things which were also seen by the people; also those wondrous things which every day happen in the whole world and the causes and details of which are gained by the saints in revelations; and also the works and deeds and things which are hidden or far away, yet are revealed unto some at the time of their actual occurence.

Without matter: as for instance the men that appeared unto Abraham, the ladder of Jacob, the revelation about the tabernacle (try only to look at and to act with the likeness that appeared unto thee on the mountain, and so on), the divine light of exalted rays that shone for Paul on the way and blinded his eyes. It is well known that, though a revelation, it was visible and perceptible by the senses, so that also those who were with him saw and heard it; yet it was not a material revelation, nor a natural and elementary light, as the
157 blessed commentator denotes in his commentary on the story in the Acts: And those who went on the way with Paul, stood in amazement while they heard the voice, yet did not see anyone. He comments on the words, in amazement' thus: In silence without [uttering] a word, also seized with doubt, because they had caught the voice that had spoken to him and, as far as it was possible for them, had seen the light that appeared unto him. Lest it should be surmised later that Saul had invented what had happened and that which had been wrought unto him, while none of those who were with him had heard or seen it. But they did not see anyone. For

1) ܚܛܘܦܐ

they did not see Jesus, because, as I have said, that which appeared was even no sensible light, but an incomprehensible apperception which in an immaterial way was given him by divine action in the likeness of a vision of light, so that he thought that the heavens were opened and so on. — These are the revelations which have taken place through the medium of the bodily senses. They are exalted above any commixture with the elements or any of the sensible and human events.

But those who receive these revelations are not enveloped in ecstasy of mind, as in the case of the revelation that takes place through the eyes of the soul in the vision of the soul, as: I saw the Lord sitting on a high throne and Seraphs each with six wings round it [1], and as in the revelation unto Ezekiel, in the revelation of the wheels and the amazing images, and the sound from the wheels resembling the sound of the
158 sea, and the glorifications heard from the Cherubs with many eyes, which say: Blessed is the majesty of the Lord in His place. How much subtler these revelations are than those of the first mentioned class, is known to the illuminated. [To the second class also belongs] for instance the vessel that appeared to Peter and the animals in it, with the other things described. And he who wishes, may recognize these things from the scriptures.

Rapture of the spirit, as for instance when he was taken up unto the third heaven, and whether this was in the body or without, I do not know. But he was taken to Paradise and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter [2].

Prophecy, as for instance the things that happened unto the Prophets, who foretold future events, many ages before they took place, as it was also given unto Balaam the sorcerer to foretell many things through the spirit of prophecy, things even more numerous than what prophets had prophesied.

In some intellectual way. As for instance the blessed Paul says: I pray that you may be filled with the knowledge of God in all wisdom and spiritual understanding [3]. And: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge

1) Isaiah 6, 1 2) 2 Cor. 12, 2—4
3) Colossians 1, 9

of Him: the eyes of your hearts being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and the riches of His glory in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power in us who believe [1]) and the other things which were given to the Apostle in a revelation of knowledge concerning
159 the things of the world to be, and the order of resurrection and the alteration of human bodies and so on. And as for the degree of exalted understanding and the knowledge of the divine nature, as for instance that [man] is the likeness of the invisible God and that with His hand He has made the worlds, God has given us revelation by His spirit. Again we know in part and we understand in part [2]; and: In the beginning was the word [3]; and: Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God [4]) and so on. Again, unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out [5]; and: He who worketh all after the counsel of His own will [6]; and: God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all [7]) and so on.

These are designations of the insight which was given unto them that they sought to know and understand through the Spirit the divine nature.

By dreams, as for instance happened to Abimelek and Joseph and Pharao and Nebukednesar; and when the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph the husband of Mary, and so on.

Also this it is necessary to know: that all revelations, which God has granted for the sake of teaching mankind and instructing them concerning things, take place by means of images, especially revelations unto those who are of simple understanding and of small insight in the truth. But those which are destined to comfort and to instruct some person, and to console to
160 some extent and to instruct a single person, take place without images and by intelligible apperception. This is clearly proved by the blessed commentator [8]) in the second volume on Job. For how much greater, as compared with other revelations, are the things which are given in a revelation for the intellect and the understanding through an intellectual medium and how much higher are the mysteries which serve to instruct all concerning God. This is perfection of knowledge.

1) Ephesians 1, 17—19 2) 1 Corinthians 13, 12 3) John 1, 1
4) Matthew 16, 16 5) Romans 11, 33 6) Ephesians 1, 11
7) Romans 11, 32 8) Theodore

And also this it is becoming to know: Revelation and [divine] action are different from truth and knowledge in so far as revelation is not the exact truth, but only shows indications and signs corresponding to human strength. Neither may the action and the wondrous things in those revelations be called knowledge and truth. They are called inspiration caused by [divine] action. So that it is impossible to gain from them instruction concerning God's foreknowledge or His incomprehensible nature or His different qualities or the understanding of the mysteries of His will concerning mankind and the other things which are to be attained by sound knowledge concerning Him. Therefore: the mysteries which are attained by the intellect through insight into the divine nature is different from the action by which the mind is inspired during a certain time. Therefore it is not absolutely necessary that every one to whom a revelation is imparted or who is influenced by a consoling action, must know the truth and the exact knowledge con-
161 cerning God. For many are those to whom such things were imparted, yet knew God as children only.

XX

ON VARIOUS INTELLIGIBLE FORCES OF THE MIND IN CONNECTION WITH THE ACTION OF REVELATIONS AND SPIRITUAL VISIONS

Divine sight is a non-apperceptible mental revelation. Divine revelation is an emotion of the mind by spiritual understanding, concerning the divine being. It is not even a faculty of the nature of the angels to be stirred into emotion at will, without a revelation granted by [divine] grace. Emotion by revelations concerning God's activity is different from emotion by revelations concerning the nature of His being. The former is of a nature to have analogy with apperceptible things. The latter has absolutely no analogy with the intellect or anything. It is threefold purity as to its parts and its nature, as it is said. And it is impossible that one of the thousand righteous should be deemed worthy of this high apperception. Also speculation concerning the incarnation of our Lord and His revelation in the flesh is said to belong to divine speculation.

The true sight of the angels is emotion by spiritual understanding concerning their domain. But it is impossible for us
162 to see the nature of spiritual forces without the mind.

When man is deemed worthy of seeing them in their nature and in their place and as they are in their spiritual creation, grace moves his mind by the revelation of spiritual insight concerning them. When the soul has been purified and is worthy of seeing its fellows, their sight is[1]) perceived with these eyes. They are not objects and they cannot be seen as they are, without alteration, but by psychic sight which is true contemplation. This means: without deterioration of their nature by sight. This sight cannot be acquired by any man without the second purification of the mind.

But the fact that the angels appear unto some men in images, is not due to true sight; but the angels minister unto the order of government by their mission. Or they show themselves for the consolation and encouragement of the simple, [in forms] perceptible by sight.

Such visions even happen to those who are not pure. But the first kind happens to illuminated and initiated people, who, by the glorious course of solitude, have been elevated unto the rank of purity.

XXI

ON THAT WHICH HAPPENS DURING PRAYER [UNTO THOSE WHO LIVE] IN SOLITUDE

Who is he that knows that delightful bending of the knees, when the tongue is silent and the heart silently utters some glorification, and its delightful emotion does not abate, the
163 body resting on the knees in silence? Blessed who eats from these things perpetually. But they do not happen at will, nor when one seeks them. This is in part the delight which is given for the consolation of him who walks without a blame before the Lord in the course of solitude.

If he continues this course in all simplicity, and seeks the purity of his service, and if his behaviour is worthy, after some time he will be deemed worthy of the things mentioned above.

1) In some Mss.: and

As to those who are novices in this course and who have a fixed aim, Grace at first will make them apt for the taste of these and similar things by recitation and it will draw their thoughts towards its self, away from earthly thoughts. Then they will work and wake and pray without becoming fatigued. Unto those who are trained to some extent in the mysteries of solitude, apperceptive power during prayer and service will be imparted.

XXII

ON VARIOUS [EXPERIENCES] DURING PRAYER AND ON THE LIMITS OF THE POWER OF THE MIND, AND IN HOW FAR IT HAS POWER TO MOVE ITS ARBITRARY IMPULSES BY THE VARIOUS HABITS OF PRAYER. AND WHAT IS THE LIMIT PRESCRIBED TO NATURE DURING PRAYER, THE LIMIT WHICH PRAYER IS NOT ALLOWED TO SURPASS. AND HOW WHEN IT HAS PASSED IT AND HAS PROCEEDED FARTHER, IT IS NO LONGER PRAYER, EVEN THOUGH WHAT HAPPENS IS CALLED BY THE NAME OF PRAYER

Glory to Him whose gift has been poured out upon mankind, in that He has ordained that they, although of the flesh, should serve on the earth the class of immaterial beings and has deemed worthy the nature of mortals to speak about such
164 mysteries, especially sinners as we are, who are not even worthy of hearing speech concerning such things. In His bounty He has opened our blind heart to understand, by the contemplation of the scriptures and the instruction of the great Fathers even although I have not been deemed worthy of experiencing for personal zeal one thousandth of what I have written with my hands, especially in this tract, which we have ventured to write for the illumination and exhortation of our soul and of those who come across it, that perhaps, on account of its desire, it may be incited to approach unto practice.

How then? Delight during prayer is different from sight during prayer. The latter is more excellent than the former, as an adult man is superior to a little boy. It will happen

that the words become sweet in the mouth and that one word of prayer is repeated infinitely so that no feeling of satiety with it causes thee to proceed and to pass over to a second.

Sometimes from prayer a certain contemplation is born which also makes prayer vanish from the lips. And he to whom this contemplation happens becomes as a corpse without soul, in ecstasy. This we call sight during prayer and not an image or form forged by phantasy, as fools say. Also in this contemplation during prayer there are degrees and differences in gifts. But till this point there is still prayer. For thought has not yet passed into the state where there is no prayer, but a
165 state superior to it. For the motions of the tongue and the heart during prayer, are keys. What comes after them is the entering into the treasury. Here then all mouths and tongues are silent, and the heart, the treasurer of the thoughts, the mind, the governor of the senses, the daring spirit, that swift bird, and all their means and powers and the beseeching persuasions have to stand still there: for the master of the house has come.

For like as the whole force of the laws and the commandments which God has laid down for mankind, have their term in the purity of the heart, according to the word of the Fathers, so all kinds and habits of prayer with which mankind prays unto God, have their term in pure prayer. Lamentations and selfhumiliations and beseechings and inner supplications and sweet tears and all other habits which prayer possesses, — as I have said: their boundary and the domain within which they are set into motion, is pure prayer.

As soon as the spirit has crossed the boundary of pure prayer and proceeded onwards, there is neither prayer, nor emotions, nor tears, nor authority, nor freedom, nor beseechings, nor desire, nor longing after any of those things which are hoped for in this world or in the world to be.

Therefore there is no prayer beyond pure prayer, and all its emotions and habits by their authority with freedom conduct
166 the spirit thus far and there is struggle in it; but beyond this limit it passes into ecstasy and is no longer prayer. From here onwards the spirit desists from prayer; there is sight, but the spirit does not pray.

Every kind of prayer which exists is set into motion by the impulses of the soul. But when the mind has entered the emotions of spirituality, then it can no longer pray.

Prayer is different from contemplation during prayer, though they are caused by each other. One is the seed; the other the load [of harvest] borne by the hands, while the reaper is astonished by the undescribable sight of how from the mean and bare grains of seed glorious ears suddenly grow up before him. And during sight he remains without motion.

Every prayer which exists, is demand and request, or praise or thanksgiving. But judge whether there exists any of these modes, or demand of anything, when the mind has passed into this domain and has entered this place.

I ask this of those who know the truth. It is not given to every one to enquire into these distinctions, but only to those who have been personally witness and ministers of this matter or have been brought up in the presence of the spiritual authors[1]) of such experiences and have received the truth from their mouth and have passed their days with such occupations, asking and answering concerning matters of truth. As among ten thousand men there is scarcely to be found a single one
167 who has fulfilled the commandments and the laws to any extent and who has been deemed worthy of serenity of soul, so there is rarely to be found one among many, who on account of strenuous vigilance has been deemed worthy of pure prayer and who has made his way into this domain and been deemed worthy of this mystery. Not many are deemed worthy of pure prayer, only a few. But as to that mystery which lies beyond, there is scarcely to be found a single man in every generation who has drawn near to this knowledge of God's grace.

Prayer is a beseeching for, a caring for, a longing for some thing, either liberation from the evil things here or [in the world] to come, or a desire for promised things, or a demand for something by which man wishes to be brought nearer unto God. In these emotions are included all habits of prayer. But its being pure or not depends upon the following circumstances. If, when the spirit is prepared to offer one of the emotions which we have enumerated, any foreign deliberation or distraction mingles itself with it, prayer is called non-pure, because it has brought upon the altar of the Lord an animal which it is not allowed [to offer], the altar which is an upright, intelligible heart.

1) literally: the Fathers

But when the spirit gives itself with longing to one of these emotions, in accordance to the necessity of the case, at the time of beseeching, and when on account of its alacrity the gaze of the emotion is directed by the eye of faith beyond the curtain of the heart, the entrances of the soul are closed thereby against the foreign deliberations which are called
168 strangers [1]), whom the law does not allow to enter the tabernacle. This is called the accepted offering of the heart and pure prayer. Its boundaries are to this point. What lies beyond cannot be called prayer.

If any one should mention what by the Fathers is called spiritual prayer, without understanding the force of the words of the Fathers, saying: This belongs also to the domain of prayer, I think that, if he should reach true insight, it would prove a blasphemy if there should be found any of the creatures who should say that spiritual prayer can be prayed at all. For all prayer that can be prayed, lies on this side of spirituality. And all that is spiritual, is in kind free from emotion and prayer.

Now if man is hardly able to pray pure prayer what must be said of spiritual prayer? The holy Fathers are accustomed to designate all profitable emotions and all spiritual working by the name of prayer. And the blessed commentator [2]) even counts beautiful deeds as prayer, though it is clear that prayer is different from deeds which are things done. But sometimes they designate by spiritual prayer that which they sometimes call contemplation; and sometimes knowledge; and sometimes revelations of intelligible things. Doest thou see, how the Fathers
169 change their designations of spiritual things? This is because accurate designations can only be established concerning earthly things. The things of the world-to-be do not possess a true name, but only simple cognition, which is exalted above all names and signs and forms and colours and habits and composite denominations. When, therefore, the knowledge of the soul exalts itself above this circle of visible things, the Fathers use concerning this knowlegde any designations they like, though no one does know the real names in order that the psychic deliberations may be based on them. We use denominations and riddles, according to the word of the holy Dionysius [3]) who

1) ܓܝܘܪ̈ܐ proselytes 2) Theodore of Mopsuestia 3) Areopagita

says: We use signs and syllables, conventional names and words in behalf of the senses. But when by spiritual working our soul is moved unto divine things, then the senses and their workings are superfluous to us, as also the spiritual forces of the soul are superfluous as soon as our soul becomes the image of the godhead through unification with the incomprehensible and radiant in the rays of the sublime, by those impulses which are not for the eyes.

Therefore, my brother, of this thou mayest be sure: that the power of the mind to use the emotions with discernment has its limit in purity during prayer. When the mind has reached this point, it will either turn backwards, or it will desist from prayer; so prayer is, as it were, a mediator between the psychic and the spiritual state. As long, however, as
170 it is in emotion, it is in the psychic state. But as soon as it has passed this limit, prayer ceases.

As the saints, in the world to come do not pray, when the mind has been engulfed by the [divine] spirit, but they dwell in ecstasy in that delightful glory, so the mind, when it has been made worthy of perceiving the future blessedness, will forget itself and all that is here, and it will not be moved any longer by the thought of anything [1]).

Man, therefore, may freely go so far as to say: all excellence whatever and all orders of prayer whatever, in body or in spirit, are in the realm of free will, as well as the mind that dominates the senses. But when the influence of the spirit reigns over the mind that regulates the senses and the deliberations, freedom is taken away from nature which no longer governs but is governed. And how could there be prayer at that time, when nature does not possess power over its self, but is conducted by an outward force without knowing whither. Nature then does not direct the emotions of the spirit according to its will, but captivity reigns over nature in that hour and conducts it there where sensual apperception ceases; because nature even has no will at that time, even to this extent that it does not know whether it is in or without the body, as scripture testifies. Has therefore such a one prayer who is a captive to this degree and who even does not know himself? So no one should say with blasphemy that there is anyone

1) Cf. Plotinus's description of the mind's delight when it has forgotten matter VI, 7 § 34.

who could venture to say that it is possible to pray spiritual
171 prayer. This audaciousness the Meṣalleyānē vindicate for themselves, those haughty ignorants who proclaim concerning themselves that they are able to pray spiritual prayer when they like. But those who are humble and have insight and are inclined to learn from the Fathers and know the limits of nature, do not abandon their deliberations to this audaciousness.

And therefore, when there is no prayer, can then this unspeakable gift be designated by the name of prayer? The cause, as we say, is therein, that at the time of prayer [this gift] is granted unto those who are worthy. And in prayer it has its starting-point, because this glorious gift cannot be granted excepted at this time, according to the testimony of the Fathers. Therefore it is called by the name of prayer, because from prayer the mind is conducted towards this blessed state, and because prayer is its starting-point and it does not occur on any other occasion, according to the testimony of Mar Euagrius and others. And we see also that the majority of the saints say that during prayer their mind was snatched [1]).

If any one asks: How is it that at this time only these great and unspeakable gifts are granted? we answer: Because at this time, more than in any other hour, man is concentrated and prepared to look unto God and to desire and to expect compassion from Him. In short: it is the time that the demand of him who is at the gate of the king and asks desi-
172 ringly and beseechingly, is likely to be heard. And what time is there when man is so cautious and fit and prepared, as the time when he prays? Or should it be becoming that he should be deemed worthy of this at the time when he sleeps or settles any affair or is distracted of mind? However, the saints do not even know a time of idleness, because at all times they are occupied by spiritual things, for when they are not standing in preparation for prayer, they often meditate upon some stories of the scriptures, or their mind meditates in contemplation of the created things, or [their mind is occupied] with other things meditation of which is profitable.

At the time of prayer the gaze of the spirit is exclusively fixed on God and the tendency of its emotion is wholly directed towards Him, and it offers to Him the beseechings of the

1) ܡܬܚܛܦ

heart with the necessary zeal, with fervour and ardour. Therefore it is becoming that at this time, when a single thought dominates the soul, divine mercy should well forth from Him. For we see also that when we offer the visible sacrifice, while every one is prepared and standing in prayer, supplicating and beseeching, the mind being concentrated upon God, the gift of the spirit descends upon the bread and wine which we lay on the altar. To Zechariah also the angel appeared at the time of prayer and announced to him the conception of John. And
173 to Peter appeared, while he was praying on the roof the prayer of the sixth hour, the revelation that made him acquainted with the accession of the gentiles, by the cloth that descended from heaven and by the animals that were on it. And to Cornelius appeared, when he prayed, that which is written concerning him. And God spoke with Joshua the son of Nun while he was prostrated in prayer. And over the ark was placed a plate, from which the priest was taught by divine revelation what was required, at the time when the high priest, once in a year, entered the inner sanctuary at the dreadful time of prayer while all the tribes of the children of Israel were gathered and stood in trembling and fear in the outer tabernacle in prayer. And while the high priest was prostrated the voice of God was heard from the plate over the ark, in a dreadful, unspeakable revelation. How dreadful was the mystery that was ministered in this ceremony! So all the revelations and visions that happened unto the saints, happened at the time of prayer.

What time is so holy and fit for sanctification and the receiving of gifts as the time of prayer, in which man speaks with God? At this time man utters his desires unto God, beseeching Him and speaking with Him and his whole emotion and thought are concentrated from all sides upon Him with
174 compulsion; of God alone he thinks and Him alone he supplicates; his whole thought is absorbed in discourse with Him and his heart is full of Him. It is in this state, therefore, that the Holy Ghost joins with the things which man prays, some unattainable insights, which it stirs in him in accordance with his aptitude of being moved so that by these insights the emotion of prayer ceases, the mind is absorbed in ecstasy and the desired object of prayer is forgotten. The impulses are drowned in a heavy drunkenness and man is no longer in this world. Then

there is no longer discrimination of body or of soul, nor recollection of anything, as Euagrius says.

Prayer namely is steadfastness of mind, which is terminated only by the light of the holy Trinity through ecstasy. Thou seest, how prayer is terminated when those insights which are born in the spirit from prayer, pass into ecstasy, as I have said in the beginning of this treatise and in several places further on.

Further he[1]) says: Steadfastness of mind is highness of intelligible apperceptions[2]), which resembles the colour of the sky over which rises, at the time of prayer, the light of the holy Trinity. When is a man deemed worthy of the whole of this grace such that during prayer he is exalted unto this height? He says: When the mind puts off the old man and puts on
175 the new one by grace, then it also sees its steadfastness at the time of prayer, resembling sapphire or the colour of heaven, as the place of God was called by the elders of Israel, to whom it appeared on the mountain[3]).

So, as I have said, this gift is not to be called spiritual prayer, but what then? The fruit of pure prayer, which is engulfed in the spirit. The mind has ascended here above prayer. And, having found what is more excellent, it desists from prayer. And further there is no longer prayer, but the gaze in ecstasy at the unattainable things which do not belong to the world of mortals, and peace without knowledge of any earthly thing. This is the well known ignorance[4]) concerning which Euagrius says: Blessed is he who has reached, during prayer, unconsciousness which is not to be surpassed.

XXIII

ON THE SPEECH OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Every apperceptible thing, be it action or word, is the revelation of what is hidden within, if its cause be not entirely accidental, but return constantly. The latter element only is

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1) evidently Euagrius 2) literally: things 3) Exodus 24, 9—11
4) Cf. Dionysius Areopagita p. 274 [10]

considered in connection with reward; the former is taken into consideration to a small extent only. For the strength or the weakness of will is evidenced in the doing of evil or of good things, not by anything that happens accidentally; but the proof of its freedom is the constant repetition.

To fate is given power; sometimes even so as to dominate
176 freedom of will. Good or bad accidents meet man be it in order to spur him on, or to test, or to train, or to reward him. That which serves to spur on, is good; that which serves to test, is considered as being bad; that which serves to train and to remunerate is indifferent.

There are no fortuitous accidents; for nothing fortuitous happens to man, good or evil. There is a governor who governs the things of this world. There is a guardian with each of us, whom nothing escapes and whose attention never fails. But all accidents are foreseen by this appointed guardian. And in these four kinds [of accidents] his providence is active.

Passionate prayer, the companion of a course [of life] in harmony with its passionate nature, alters the character of those [who are subject to accidents] and brings about amelioration. The good are strengthened and corroborated by it, to the bad it causes a change to the opposite direction. Therefore, doubt not what I have said: there is no accident fortuitous or without a governor. If indeed prayer combined with steadfestness is able to alter or to direct, we have to believe that there is a governor to every accident. Blessed is he who compares every accident which happens to him, with his hidden [state], who scrutinizes its cause and beholds its governor. He that is desirous to acquire experience with God, cannot but become a fool to the world and a hater of human glory.

Admirable is the man who conceals the greatness of his work by lowliness of soul. Such a one is admired by the angels.

As guardians of righteousness have to be reckonned by thee
177 involuntary defects, which sometimes are found with those who are watchful.

There is no prayer which is heard so soon as when a man asks to be reconciled with those who are angry with him. And when a man charges himself with the fault, this prayer is answered without delay. If thou fulfillest thy duty and art watchful in thy domain, yet art weak and despicable in thy

own eyes, hating human glory, then know that thou art surely in the way of God. But if thou perceivest that thou art not in this state and, when thou explorest thyself, thou seest that thoughts of blame cause thee pain, then know that thou art void of truth and in secret relation with falsehood.

XXIV

ON THE THINGS A BROTHER IS PROVIDED WITH IN HIS CELL

It occurs many times in a day, that a brother, even if thou shouldst give him the kingdom of the world, would not consent at that hour to leave his cell or to [allow] any one to visit him. For the time of commerce [1]) has presented itself, of a sudden. Such things happen on days such as are considered as days of relaxation. Often on such days and even on those wherein he has intercourse with others, grace of a sudden will visit him, in tears without measure, or a vivid affection moving
178 the heart, or a certain gladness without cause, or the delight of kneelings.

I know a brother who put the key in the door of his cell in order to shut it, for he was going out in order to be occupied with idle things as the scripture says [2]). And there grace visited him, so that he returned immediately. Nobody, therefore, shall blame a brother if, on the days on which he does not keep canonical solitude, he should happen to neglect the congregational service sometimes. Especially if he be not reputed base or given to inane occupations, and if he does not neglect it on account of bodily labour. You know, my brethren, that our work is not only that which is accomplished before the eyes of men; but we have also a service which is hidden from the eyes of men and which is not known to novices and lay people. For you are acquainted with the fact, that the solitary is under a rule and not his own master. Therefore if any of his brethren comes to visit him and he answers him not, he shall return immediately without blaming his brother. For he

1) Often the image of spiritual things
2) Eccles. 1, 14 etc.

does not know that with which his brother is occupied at that time. The cell of a solitary is the cave of the rock in which God spoke with Moses, as the Fathers say. Those solitaries who have not been put to the test by the service which consists in the true taste of solitude, do not know these things. They despise their brethren and judge, claiming for themselves equality with them in all things.

179 It also happens sometimes that a brother is suddenly set face to face with some necessary strife, and, with his hands laid on his heart, he is in danger of flying away. Being prostrated he beseeches God, not able to bear the voice of any one. These varying states are known to those who once have crossed this ocean and are acquainted with the winds blowing [there].

It may also happen that the thought of repentance may rise in a man and that his past may suddenly be united with the memory of his death and present itself before him. And this brilliant sun will be darkened before his eyes and every recollection of the world will be effaced from his heart.

It may also happen that suddenly billows may rise against him and his ship be engulfed in hidden abysses; things which are not known to every one, but which unexpectedly assail the solitary in his solitude owing to the violent struggles of Satan, so that the cell becomes a place of mourning.

Numerous are the varying states of this ocean and who knows its labours and its multifarious connections, the wonderful pearls in its depth and the animals rising from it? Blessed is he who sleeps not during the whole of his course until the port of death.

No one loves anything without multiplying his connections [with it].

No one is able to occupy himself with divine things without having cast away and despised temporal ones; becoming a stranger to worldly honour and delights, following the disdain of the cross, drinking every day vinegar and gall on account of the affections, men, demons and poverty.

Be alert, my brother, and be like a prudent merchant, bea-
180 ring thy pearl and wandering through the world, anxious that its excellent beauty be not besmirched. Be careful, lest it be stolen from thee on account of thy laxity and thou go to Hell in distress.

Persue the small consolation which is gained from labour in

its time, that thou may be deemed worthy of that great consolation which liberates those who have found it, from torment in this place of distresses. Do not reject small things, lest thou be bereaved of the great ones. No one has ever seen a child which sucks milk putting meat into its mouth. By means of small things the gate unto great ones is opened. Thou disdainest God, o my brother who desirest that God shall govern thee without His rule. No one has been entrusted with great things, without having been first tried in small ones. Think of this, o my brother, and remember me in due time: every station which on the morrow thou attainest to in this way of excellence and knowledge of the truth, will be found by thee more glorious and excellent than that in which thou hast spent the night before. Thou departest, wondering at the beauty of the station which thou has entered to-day. But its beauty vanishes by the beauty of that which thou wilt reach to-morrow. Who can perceive the mind's varying states, full of delight? Pray only, that the gate may be opened before thee.

Be on thy guard against dejectedness. Thou servest not under a tyrant; thy service is under a kind Lord, who has given thee all, without taking from thee anything and who, before thou didst exist at all, destined thee to occupy thy present place. Who can do justice to His grace even as shown by His calling us into existence?

181 O, for His immeasurable grace! Who can sufficiently tell the glory of Him who has given us the knowledge of all things? Not only of those which are manifest, but also of those which are hidden, so that we know that, if there is anything that we know not, we must ask it of Him; who has taught thee, o mortal, to be moved by the desire of seeking that of which the knowledge is not in thy nature? Never seek a consolation that lies without the heart, which is the knowledge of discernment. Exalt thyself above all consolation administered by the senses, that thou may be worthy of that consolation which lies beyond. The solitary who has become alien to the consolation of the world, without expecting every day the consolation of Christ, is dead in his living state.

For God is compassionate and prone to give; but He desires that we give the opportunity. For He rejoices when man offers a wise prayer.

The mark of him who is recovering from illness is that he

is desirous of the hidden things. There is delay, however, if he beholds essential health. He who wearies of asking is the companion of him who wearies because of delay. Weariness declines to ask in prayer, viz. it is an impediment to asking. Dejectedness shortens prayer and bars its prolongation. Expectation gives patience and incites us to prolong prayer. Expectation makes light the weight of fatigue in the limbs. It also knows how to impart rest to the heart in its troubles. There is no load the weight of which is more agreeable than work with expectation; nor is there any comrade with whom
182 intercourse is more desired than with it. Prison is a pleasant habitation if it be there. Make it thy companion, o repentant brother, then thou wilt not perceive any of the labours of thy struggle. If thou art in thy cell, it will be with thee. If thou art found among men, fix thy mind on it. And if at any time thy heart errs after anything on the earth, this world and all that is in it will be found alien to thee. If thou sleep, make it thy bed-companion; and converse with it until thou art enfolded in sleep. Then no depraved deliberation will draw near thy heart, because thy occupation is of an immaterial kind and no object clad with matter, which by its appearance moves the spirit, is able to show itself there; and no demoniac deliberation knows how to show itself detached from material appearance.

The fruit of life sprouts from endurance in prayer. And expectation is a helper during prayer to those who possess it. When thou prayest, remember the husbandman who sows in hope. And He who causes to return twofold the seed of the husbandman who sows in faith, and who has estimated the seeking of His kingdom and His righteousness higher than the temporal things, He will incline himself to our prayer to our demands, as He has promised. Amen.

XXV

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF THE SOUL THAT SEEKS PROFOUND CONTEMPLATION TO IMMERSE ITSELF IN IT AND SO TO ESCAPE FROM BODILY DELIBERATIONS WHICH ARISE FROM THINGS RECOLLECTED

Every [1]) thing that is above another one is concealed from what is beneath it. And this is not caused by its being covered
183 by other bodies. For it possesses naturally the faculty to unveil its secrecy whenever it likes to do so. Thus all things which are essentially intelligible have no external distinctions of rank; these distinctions are confined to their emotions. This implies manifestly that they are more suited to receive, without any intermediary, the primeval light, than things of a lower [2]) rank, not materially nor locally, but in relation to the high degree of purity or moderation of the minds, with reference to the faculty that receives hints from above.

All things which are by their nature intelligible, are hidden from what is beneath them; not on account of natural divergences, but on account of excellence of impulses. This I say in respect of the members of [different] classes, viz. the classes of holy forces, the classes of souls, the classes of demons. The first have the middle place; the last the lowest in a natural and local respect and also with regard to their emotions.

Each of the classes is hidden from the other as to their intelligible character, whether they see or not; from the inferior ones they are also hidden by nature.

Now then, because incorporeal beings are not to be seen by other beings in the same way as corporeal beings, but their [power to] see one another is said to be dependent upon their emotions, namely the excellency and temperance of the emotions — therefore they see one another if they are equal

1) With the ideas of this chapter compare Frothingham, *Stephen Bar Sudaili*, p. 92: "Every intelligent nature is determined, known and comprehended by the essence which is above it; and determines, knows and comprehends the essence which is below it: but to the pure mind alone belongs the vision above and below". This seems to be the opening sentence of the *Book of Hierotheos*.

2) literally: later

in this respect even at a distance and not as phantoms, but with real sight and in their true nature.

184 Only — the cause of all is exalted above these distinctions, He, who is alone to be adored.

The demons, though they are very impure, are not deprived of seeing the members of their own classes. But they do not see the two degrees that are above them because spiritual sight is serenity of emotions. These are their mirror and their eyes. And when the emotions have become darkened, they do not see the orders which are above them. [Only] one another they see, because they are more material than the order of spiritual things, in comparison with them. Such is the state of the demons.

The souls, in accordance with their being impure and obscure, have not the faculty to see even the members of their own classes. Being deprived of seeing one another, they are also deprived of seeing themselves. But if they are purified and return unto the original state in which they were created, they clearly gaze at the three classes, viz. at those which are beneath themselves, at those which are above themselves, and at one another. This does not mean that they see all these classes only when they are transformed into material similitudes: angels, demons or the cognate soul. But they see them in their nature, being in their spiritual state, angels, demons and souls.

If thou sayest, however, that it is impossible that demon or angel be seen in their spiritual state without being altered, then
185 it is not the soul that sees, but the body; or wherefore, then, is purification necessary? Demons are seen sometimes, and also angels, it is true, by those who are not pure. But they see them with their bodily eye when they see them, where no purification is needed. But the soul that has been purified sees not thus; it sees them in their spiritual state with its natural eye, viz. with its intellectual faculty.

That the souls see one another, even when they are in the body, is not surprising. Of this fact there is an evident proof which thou wilt acknowledge, because its witness is trustworthy. The blessed Athanasius, the confessor and Catholicus, gives witness to it in his book on the dealings of Mar Antonius. One time when Mar Antonius prayed, he saw a man's soul ascending with great honour. He uttered a blessing over him that had been

deemed worthy of all this grace. This was the blessed Ammon, the recluse. And the mountain the blessed Antonius inhabited was at a distance of thirteen days from Nitria. — Here is a proof of the three things we have maintained, viz. spiritual beings see one another even at a distance, without their being impeded by space and the presence of objects; souls see one another when they have been purified; when they see they do
186 not see in a bodily way but by spiritual faculty, for it is clear that bodily sight can see what is before it; but as for seeing at a distance a different sight is needed.

These highest classes possess an unlimited multiplicity of number. And distinctions and orders are noted among them. Some of them are called princes and magistrates, powers and lords. Perhaps those which are entrusted with magistracy and authority are smaller in number than those which are compelled to obey their commandment, says the master of teachers Diodorus Rhetor[1]). For they are in the possession of power and great if partial insight, in accordance with the highness of their orders, being gradated so that they ascend from degree to degree till they reach the one who is older and mightier and more glorious than any other and who is the head and the foundation of all creatures. The head, I say, not the creator of the primeval wonderful works of God.

The angels and the archangels are very far from attaining to the wisdom of God, their and our creator. They are as far from it, as those of the lower degree are from them, but also no farther. Far, I say, as to their being higher or lower in their mutual relations; not in a spatial sense, but in respect of power and insight. Thus we say that they are higher or lower in respect of natural power and insight; for in accordance with the measure they have reached, greater or lesser knowledge is inherent in them.

187 All heavenly beings are named by the divine instruction with nine designations. It divides these three classes each into three subdivisions. The first comprises thrones exalted, high and holy; and Cherubs with many eyes; and Seraphs with many wings. The [second] class [comprises] lords and powers and magistrates. The third: princes and archangels and angels.

According to the meaning of the Hebrew, these terms are

1) Cf. Introduction, also for the provenience of the following classification of heavenly beings.

to be interpreted thus: Seraphs means those who cause heat and fire. Cherubs means magnitude of knowledge and effusion of wisdom. Thrones means divine acceptance and good pleasure.

This first class is called [that of] the Initiated, not because they see spiritually by the intermediary of the various apperceptible symbols, or because from spiritual writings they have acquired understanding concerning the Essence; but because they are full of the exalted light of the whole of immaterial knowledge and have been saturated with the essential contemplation of the threefold rays of the beauty that creates all beauties, so far as it has been permitted to them. And because they have been deemed worthy of communion with Jesus, not by means of images of holy formation, which with a certain exactness depict the divine likeness; but because they are in truth near to Him, stamped by Him with the mark of the primary acceptance of the knowledge of His divine illuminated. By the godhead they are filled with essential knowledge, as it is among the angels, and with primary insight into the godhead.

Another and clearer [description] of the designations of the highest orders.

138 Thrones are honoured [beings]. Lords are those who rule kingdoms. Princes the governors of the air. Magistrates are those who rule the peoples and human individuals. Forces are those whose sight is frightful, viz. who are powerful with strength. Seraphs are those who sanctify. Cherubs are bearers. Guards[1]) are those who watch. Angels are messengers.

On the first day eight kinds were created, seven in silence, one by voice, viz. light. On the second day the firmament. On the third the gathering of waters and the sprouting plants. On the fourth the different luminaries. On the fifth the fowls, the reptiles and the fishes. On the sixth the beasts and men.

The form of the whole world is length and breadth. The head is the East; the end is the west; the right part is the North; the left part is the South.

The earth is as a bed; and the highest heaven as a vault; the second heaven as a wheel adaptated to the higher one. And the borders of heaven and earth are joined one to the other. The Ocean surrounds them as a belt. Beyond it are high mountains ascending unto the sky. The sun goes its way

1) ܥܝܪܐ, also a usual term for angels in Syriac.

behind these mountains the whole night. The great sea is beyond them. And this encompasses four times the area of the dry land and one fourth is dry land.

XXVI

189 ### AGAINST THOSE WHO SAY: IF GOD IS GOOD WHEREFORE HAS HE MADE THESE THINGS?

Sin, hell and death do not at all exist with God. For they are facts, not persons. Sin is the fruit of will. There was a time, when it was not. And there will be a time, when it will not be. Hell is the fruit of sin; at some time or other it had beginning; but its end is not known. Death, however, is provided by the wisdom of the creator. It will rule a certain time only over nature; then it will vanish altogether. Satan is the name of the deviation of will from the truth, but it is not the designation of a natural being.

Although thou findest, o my brother, some of these things also in other books, still we may not be reckoned by thee as those who seek their own glory, because we pretend the work of others to be our own, but, on the contrary, as those who are humble, since we suck from the milk of our fore-fathers those things which we have collected and placed before ourselves as objects of contemplation, with the aim of enriching the intellect with their stores in which we may pasture and be fed.

For we have not forgotten that we are not above the rank of disciples so long as we dwell in the flesh. The faculty of discernment is the emotionality of the natural ideas. When these go the natural way in their emotions, they meet with the changing elements and worlds. But when [they go] a subsidiary way, another use will be found for the former ones. For when the natural [faculties] are twofold in their intellectual use, they will be understood in one of these only, and that the non-psychic state.

When thou catchest the delight of the words of the service, then the mind is eager to remain in it continuously. If thou desirest, however, to fulfill its wish, then haste towards the knowledge of its cause. If thou hast attained this quickly, as

one discerning and not blind, it is not difficult for thee to taste this [delight] constantly without impediment. And what then is the influence which is also called cause? By a file, which does not add anything to it, iron is brought to brilliancy and radiance; for these properties belong to its essence. But what happens? The file removes from it the rust, which has come upon it, although no one is responsible for that. The same theory holds true as to the nature of the mind. Bring it into contact with the file; then thou wilt find how it shines at the time of service, imitating the rays of the stars. For a thing is not able to go its way [without aid]; it delays, if no one cares for it. Therefore have I said that during the recitation of Psalms (not during the prayer of the heart and recitation) the heart can hardly be captivated. It is otherwise with those; with them only small care is needed. They are able to make [recitation of Psalms] profitable. But without them, care for recitation will
191 be found to be in vain. The latter will be promoted, even if there be no other increase to it, if the former be a stock already present [1]).

Hunger is able to procure food; but it is not inclined to abstain from eating.

Delicious for the husbandman is the bread won by his sweat. Without previous sweat, the bread of truth does not give saturation. The body which is the husbandman, sweats and feeds the rational mind. And this happens even when the mind is deprived of its customary, non-natural food.

Spiritual excellency is the daughter of excellency of will and this it is necessarily. For freedom is the natural force of reason, and not slavery. But on that side, towards which it inclines and where it abides, it gives birth to a different force, which is not natural. And when this is born, freedom becomes ruled and governed by compulsion. I dare to say: it becomes bound, without self-government. Before, compulsion was voluntary; now compulsion has mastered will.

And I say that this is to be seen on both sides, when a man subdues himself on the right side and when he gives an opportunity to the left one. But the mind that has learnt to see discriminately, is able to observe how compulsion on both sides dominates freedom, when the force which is not from nature, is born

1) I am not quite certain of the meaning of the last sentences.
Verh. Abd. Lemark. 1922 (Wensinck).

from the submission of the will. I do not mean the usual force,
192 which is very difficult; but that which is called secondary.

Custom at any rate is subject to the will; though it strives to resist it. Apart from this we know two forces; one subdues the will; the other dominates nature. It has even power to alter nature. That influence dominates nature, is known to those who have been tested by it.

The varying states of the hearts and the deviating minds which are usually born from them (free and bound, living and dead) are promoted to a large extent by the disparity[1]) of contemplation which rises in human minds, concerning divine judgments. By the mediation of this disparity the world[2]) has been preserved for thousands of years. This disparity is largely helpful towards changing the course of mortal life, and what is greatest of all, towards the contemplation of judgments which engender trust in God.

Many hearts as soon as trust has entered them, resemble a man who has taken deadly poison.

Even to true and veracious sons, with ten parts of love five parts of fear are mixed together.

Nature liable to deviation is not able to receive here the perfection of divine truth, or to know the whole will of God regarding the class of rational beings; even Paul and his equals are not sufficient for this; till the liability to err has been taken

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1) Disparity (ܦܘܠܓܢܐ ܕܫܘܝܐ, cf. Register) is a term which, as well as its opposite, often occurs in separate works, but of which it is not easy to give a clear definition. Dionysius the Areopagite is well acquainted with the idea (ἀνάγκη and ἀνωτάτω): τὴν γὰρ ἀνωτάτω εἰ τοῖς ἐκλεκτοῖς τῆς ἐν ὕλῃ τῶν ὕλων πρὸς ἕλκει διαφορᾶς καὶ τοῦτος ἡ δικαιοτάτη φρουρητικὴ, μὴ συγχωρεῖσα συμμιγῆ τὰ ἄλλα ἐν ὕλοις γενόμενα διατασσεῖσθαι ἀλλ' ἕκαστον ἐν τὰ ἴσα πάντα καὶ' εἶδος ἕκαστον, ἐν ᾧ ἕκαστον ἴδιον τέθραπται (*De divinis nominibus*, Chapter VIII). On the other hand, in the ninth chapter, Dionysius argues that ἀνάγκη is a divine property, corresponding to some extent with justice; it means that God is not composed and pervades and reaches the Universe in an equal way.

Going back in literature, we find the terms in the Neo-Platonists. Of importance is the following passage in Plotinus (*Ennéades* III II § XVII): καὶ ἐν ἑνὶ λόγῳ ὁ πᾶς εἷς· μεμέρισται δὲ τοῖς εἰς ἕκαστον ὕλην καὶ τοῦ παντὸς διάφορος τάσις βάσεως καὶ χώρου καὶ ψυχαὶ οὐκ ἴσην ἐπιμερισμένου ἕκαστον τοῖς ὅλοις ἴσους (cf. also § XVIII and III III § 3, 5 and Proclus, *Institutio Theologica*, ed. Cousin § VII).

Going further back, we find that Philo was well acquainted with the ideas of ἀνάγκη and ἀνωτάτω. Ed. Mangey I 493 seqq. is very instructive. And in the fragments Mangey gives the following sentences from Philo (II 665): ἔστιν τῶν τελειοτάτων ἀγαθῶν τὰ ἐναντία εἶναι, εἴγε τῶν μεγίστων κακῶν ἡ ἀμετρία· τὸν ἀφελομένοις ἴδιον ἔστιν ἐναντίον. And: τὸ ἄνισον λυπηρὸν καὶ διαφορητικὸν ἔστιν καὶ τὸ ἴσον ἥδιστον καὶ συνδετικὸν τῆς ὠφελείας. — Τὸ ὄνομα καὶ τὸ ἴσον τιμῆς σπέρμα, καὶ φυτηρίας κίτιον, καὶ τῆς εἰς ἅπαντα δικαιοσύνης. Λειτέον δὲ καὶ πλεονεξίᾳ ἀμετρίᾳ τε πολίτου, καὶ ξενικὰ τῶν ἴσων.

2) Reading ܥܠܡܐ in stead of ܥܠܡ

193 away, so that nature no longer errs through being aware of this.

What is parity and disparity? Disparity of contemplation — differences and variations in one soul — is the eternal thought of God being unattainable. Parity is truth being revealed.

If a nature able to err should receive in this world the exact truth, it would die by the power of its liability to err. This is 'O, depth of the riches' [1]) and 'How unsearchable are His judgments' and 'Who has known the mind of God' and the like, which in an astonishing way and among sighs rise in the mind from time to time, which by some is called the Cloud. From this, disparity of contemplation and divergence of insight are born concerning the unattainable inquiry into God's judgments.

When, however, the perfection of nature will have come, in a world without deviation, nature will be no longer afraid to know divine truth, as if it would deviate to the left because of trust. Trust engenders contempt and profusion of spirit. Fear, on the other hand, is wonted to check aberration, so that it becomes bridled. This fear thou findest in thy soul by the contemplation of the different judgments and worlds and the disparity of behaviour and the non-correspondence between the retribution provided to men in this world and the righteousness which shows itself from time to time, and [God's] constant
194 patience, and the righteous and the sinners, and the contrary and incongruous meetings of repugnant persons, as ordered by Providence. When the intellect observes all this, emotion takes hold of the whole soul. And then is born in it examination of deliberations, of words and actions and of the outlines of the domain of divine righteousness.

Now when the intellect withdraws itself from this and is exalted unto the unique Essence, by the contemplation of the properties of that good Nature [2]) which possesses eternal knowledge, which is anterior to all existence, and of all His other properties, fear is expelled at once and the mind is supported by confidence.

When the intellect descends again from that place and returns again to the worlds and their distinctions, it will fly and give way to fear, because Providence does not allow it to be always in the presence of this contemplation of truth. Therefore from

1) Romans 11,33 2) ܐܠܗܐ viz. God

time to time [fear] will take away from the heart the strength of trust which is inspired by true contemplation, and it will let the intellect be tortured by diverse opinions; lest [the intellect] should desist from judging constantly the veracity of its deliberations and actions and thus acquire cautiousness, for it does not know how it will meet the judgment of God. To whom be praise for ever and ever Amen.

XXVII

195 ## IN HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS THE SIGHT OF INCORPOREAL BEINGS IS RECEIVED BY HUMAN NATURE

All simple and subtle kinds of rational bodies can be attained to by the apperception of human nature in three ways: by personal density [which is a] non-essential way; by personal subtlety [which is a] non-essential way; by true contemplation which is essential sight.

The first way is dominated by the senses; the other by simple psychic sight; the third by the natural force of the spirit. Further one is dominated by will and reason; one by will and psychic light and all that strengthens the latter.

Will is in the first place cause; and these are the children of freedom, even if at the time of use freedom and will are silent, so long as influence is active and potent. And one only is dominated by the demonstrating [power], even without the will of the recipients and essential knowledge, even as the senses are the recipients of all accidents without the will.

These three ways are ministered by holy forces which mingle themselves with us for the sake of our instruction and in order that we may find life. Those who are impure have power to minister two of them, which they may use when they come
196 near unto us, for perdition, not for profit. To the third kind they do not approach with the purpose of using it, so as to acquire power over us to lead us astray.

For it is not possible for the children of darkness to approach light; the demons do not possess the power to set into motion the natural insights of the mind. The holy angels, however, possess this faculty of setting into motion and of

illuminating. The demons, however, possess the false insights, the children of darkness, as their power and government. From the illuminated the recipient takes light, from the dark, darkness. And what is the reason that this was given to those, and not to these? The insight which every one of these teachers shows and teaches, is first seen by him in his own person, and learnt and tasted; then he is able to transmit to us the truth of things on account of their true knowledge concerning them, which they have found first by the swift attaining power of the light and pure mind. The demons also possess swiftness, but no illumination. Swiftness is different from illumination. The former without the latter leads its possessors to destruction and insipidity; the latter teaches truth, the former sham truth; for light shows the veracity of things entirely and it becomes greater or less in accordance with behaviour.

From their knowledge the holy angels pour out into us, through the emotions caused by things, that which they taste
197 and acquire first and thus transmit to us. And these secondary teachers also set into motion in us, in correspondence with their knowledge, emotions caused by things. In the domain where they have no freedom, it is necessary [for them] to quicken in us right deliberations concerning these things. As I have said, therefore, this may be certain to thee, that even if we were able to receive it, they would not be able to teach us true contemplation, though they should be acquainted with it from of old. Every member of one party or the other — holy angels or those of the opposite group — teaches and incites us, the disciples, to behave according to his own behaviour.

To me this is true: that the mind of itself, even without the mediation of the holy angels, tends towards the good, even without instruction, but that it is unable to receive the knowledge of evil things without the mediation of the demons or the senses, [and is unable] to tend towards them of its own accord. In our nature good is implanted, evil not. And all that is foreign and is taught from without, needs an intermediary. What is planted within, however, unfolds itself naturally, even without instruction, even if dimly. But even though our nature tends of its own towards the good, it is unable, without the tutorship of the holy angels, to increase this and to be illuminated by it. We have them as teachers, as they have each
198 other, namely those who are lower [have for their teachers]

198 those who are more instructed and enlightened than themselves. So they have each other [for teachers] up to the one who has as a teacher the holy Trinity. And even he [does not receive instruction] of his own, but he has as a teacher the mediator Jesus, through whom he receives [instruction] and transmits it to those who are on the same plan and lower.

I think also this. As we naturally do not at all possess the force to be moved by divine contemplation, and we share in this deficiency with all heavenly beings, it is only by grace, without exercise or computation [on our part], that we are moved by something which naturally is foreign to the human and angelic mind. For contemplation concerning the godhead is not to be compared with other kinds of contemplation; for we possess contemplation as to their natures through our participation in the twofold nature that is theirs, because of that which is in us and also in them; but we do not participate in the nature of the Essence, nor do we possess contemplation concerning Him. As the faculty of being set into motion by this contemplation does not naturally belong to any of the rational beings of the first and middle class, it must be a gift of grace in all heavenly and earthly minds.

It is not like other faculties caused by nature, however illuminated and purified. But I think — and this is true — that the mind of us, children of man, is to be conducted [only] by revelations and insights so far as to reach this essential contemplation which is the same as true revelation; without their
199 mediation, however, our mind could not be conducted. And our mind does not possess a strength like that of those high and exalted beings who receive all revelations and contemplation from the Essence, without an intermediary. But even they [receive these revelations] through an image of the Essence, not from the Essence itself. So that our mind also is in the same degree as the other classes, not able to receive revelations and contemplation of their own, without an intermediary, but only from Jesus who sways the sceptre of the Kingdom. The other classes, viz. other primary classes receive [revelations] by handing them down one to the other, concerning all matters of government and the understanding thereof (not concerning the Essence), from the first to the second and so on till the mystery has gone through all the classes.

But many are the mysteries which remain in that one primary

class without spreading through the other classes, because, apart from that one, they are not able to receive such a great mystery. There are other mysteries again which proceed from the primary class and are revealed only to the second, but are preserved there in silence; the other classes do not perceive them. Others again are revealed to the third and fourth classes. There are also [differences of] superiority and inferiority of revelation in the case of individual angels. Some of them
200 are rich in revelations and mysteries of a high order are revealed unto them, and they receive plentiful light. Some are lower and their impulses are too weak for these mysteries. And thus among the spiritual classes there is excellency and deficiency, superiority and inferiority concerning the receiving of revelations. Apart from that upper class which is the primary of all classes, the remainder without exception receive contemplation and hints concerning the entire divine government from their fellows. And if this is the case with them, how much less are we able, without them and without an intermediary, to receive such mysteries. But as often as an apperception falls in the minds of the saints, this revelation of whatsoever mystery it be, comes from these [heavenly beings]. When it is allowed by God, revelation is handed down by each higher class to that which is lower, unto the lowest; in the same way, when it is allowed by the godhead, the mystery is handed down by those who are worthy of it unto human beings.

By their intermediary, at any rate, the saints become receivers of the light of contemplation, by which they behold the praised Essence, which is a mystery which they do not learn from each other. Those [higher beings] are administering spirits, which are sent to those who are to inherit life through the apperception of such insights of the truths as are peculiar to them.

201 In the world to be, however, this kind of transmission will be annihilated. For then one will not receive the revelation of God's glory for the delight of his soul, from his comrade, but it will be given to every one himself in so far as is in accordance with the measure of his excellency, and as he is deemed worthy of by the Lord of the Universe; but he will not receive the gift through his comrade, as is the case in this world. For there are none who learn and none who teach and none who desire to receive from their comrades what fails themselves. For one giver reveals himself there without intermediary unto

all receivers. And those who receive all spiritual delight receive from Him. So that they do not perceive Him by means of single insights but by [direct] revelation of Himself, without the outward intermediary of impulses. There is abrogated the degree of the learner and the teacher and every one's swift love is fixed on one.

Also I say that even those who are scourged in Hell are tormented with the scourgings of love. Scourgings for love's sake, namely of those who perceive that they have sinned against love, are more hard and bitter than tortures through fear. The suffering which takes hold of the heart through the sinning against love is more acute than any other torture. It is evil for a man to think that the sinners in Hell are destitute of love for the Creator. For love is a child of true knowledge such as is professed to be given to all people. Love works with its force in a double way. It tortures those who have
202 sinned, as happens also in the world between friends. And it gives delight to those who have kept its decrees. Thus it is also in Hell. I say that the hard tortures are grief for love. The inhabitants of heaven, however, make drunk their soul with the delight of love.

Some one was asked when one could believe that he had been deemed worthy of forgiveness of sins. He answered: when he perceives that he inwardly hates them with a complete hate, and that his mode of life is the contrary of what it previously was. He who is in such a state, will trust that his sins have been forgiven by God, on account of the witness borne by the conscience of his soul, according to the word of the Apostle. The heart which does not blame is a witness concerning itself.

XXVIII

A SYMBOLICAL DEMONSTRATION CONCERNING THE THEORY OF SABBATH AND SUNDAY

Sunday is the symbol of true knowledge which is not received by flesh and blood, and which is elevation above [mere] opinion. In this world, however, there is no eighth day; but neither is there a true Sabbath. The fact that God rested on the seventh day is a symbol of the rest of our nature from the course of

this life. For the grave is also of a bodily nature; it belongs to this world. Six days are accomplished in the service of life; the seventh is accomplished in the grave; the eighth in departing from it. As those who are worthy receive in this world the mysteries of the Sunday in a symbol — they do not receive the day as long as they are in their bodily nature — so
203 those who are worthy receive in this world the mysteries of the Sabbath symbolically, not the true Sabbath which is perfect rest from wanton influences. God has given us to taste of a mysterious indication of all things, but He has not decreed that we should walk here in intercourse with the real truth. For the real, not the symbolical Sabbath, will happen in the grave, viz. rest which finishes the torments of the affections and the toil against them. The whole man gives rest there to the body together with the soul.

In six days God established the existence of this world and created the elements [1]) and connected their existence with the administration of never resting motion and [ordered that they should not rest from their course before their dissolution. And from the force of these, viz. the primeval elements, He has composed our body. He did not give those rest from their motions: neither did He grant our body, their offspring, rest from service. As the term of our nature He fixed rest, when we shall follow our first relatives, rest consisting in the dissolution of life. Thus He said to Adam: In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread [2]). Till when? Till thou returnest unto the dust, for out of it wast thou taken. Thou shalt work in the ground and it shall bring forth to thee thorns and thistles. This denotes symbolically that this world is a world of service as long as it exists.

Our Lord, since the night when He sweated, has changed this sweat caused by working in the earth which brings forth thorns and thistles, into the sweat which also rises during prayer and which man should produce in the service of righ-
204 teousness. For five thousand years He left man to work in his sweat, for the way of the saints had not yet been revealed, as the Apostle says. He appeared, however, with His grace in the latter days and ordered our free will to replace sweat by sweat. At any rate this change does not show that He

1) ܟܘܣܡܐ, also the planets and zodiacal signs 2) Gen. 3, 19

ordered rest. But He was merciful upon us for the sake of our long and weary work in the earth. If, however, we desist from sweating for this [spiritual service], we must necessarily reap thorns; for desisting from this, means the service of the material earth which brings forth thorns and thistles according to her nature. In reality the thorns are the affections which grow in us from bodily seed. As we bear the image of Adam so we necessarily bear his affections too. The earth is not free to desist from bearing; for it brings forth on account of its nature. The earth is our relative according to God's witness unto us 'the dust out of which thou wast taken'. The one [brings forth] thorns; the other, the rational [earth], affections.

If now our Lord has been a symbolical example for us in every respect, viz. in all his different dealings — for till the ninth hour Friday He did not take rest from work, not even from the toilsome work which symbolically represents our whole life; the Sabbath He expected in the grave only — where then are those[1]) who pretend that there is a Sabbath in this world, viz. rest from affections? Concerning the Sunday, however, it is difficult to speak. Our Sabbath is the day of the grave. In reality our nature rests there. So every day it is
205 necessary to eradicate thorns from this earth as long as it exists. For constant service brings about decrease of weeds. But even thus the earth does not wholly become pure. If thou relaxest but a short time in this respect, the weeds will grow and cover the surface of the earth and choke thy seed and thy previous work as if it had not existed. Therefore, it is necessary to purify, every day; for a pause in this work produces a multitude of weeds.

XXIX

ON THE DIFFERENT EXCELLENT METHODS OF WISE PROVIDENCE IN EDUCATING PUPILS

All wisdom comes from the Lord, as hath been said[2]). And we exercise ourselves in our own things in order to become wise in the dealings of the Lord with us. The Father of truth

1) the Messaliens? 2) Jesus Sirach 1, 1

deals in different ways with his sons; He avoids uniformity which consists in showing always the same face, for the profit of his sons. On the contrary, for the sake of exercise He withdraws his love. Thus He displays in appearance an order such as exists not; but what is, He retains. A wise son recognizes in different attitudes his father's care for him and his discerning love.

The practice of love appears in two ways when rightly understood: in joyful events, but also in sorrowful ones. This proves that love is constantly tending towards the pleasure of
206 its object. But sometimes it makes its object suffer, because of its fulness; if it makes suffer, it suffers also itself. It resists the motions of natural compassion because of the fear of later harm. Love urges us to participate; knowledge gives strength to resist [these] feelings.

Parallel to the differences in its election are the varying forms of wise love regarding those who receive its sustenance. Let us not ask of a wise friend foolish love. He who kills his son by feeding him with honey, is not different from him that kills his son with a knife.

It is namely not worthy of the wisdom of love to sustain its object in a uniform way, the same in health as in illness. That is to say the variations which depend upon the will in the choice of the emotions, not bodily changes. If we are able to choose those [varying] times when we love some one, with discrimination, especially when such a one is under our command, is it not then but right that we attribute to God the faculty of performing the offices of his discriminating love unto us, even if we do consider them in the same way as the variations we are able to show to our friends? This is difficult to bear, as I know myself; but it is profitable nevertheless. Thy nature which is liable to deviation makes thee in need of this, if not as a retribution for what has passed, then to excite in thee fear of what will certainly happen.

Distressing accidents are to the inner education what wholesome medicines are to bodily disparity.

All that is simple among creatures, is without struggle in its
207 dealings; this is applicable to bodily as well as to non-bodily beings. Action is of such a nature that it is only possible in connection with disparity. Disparity exists only in composite beings, on account of a united duality. And though non-composite

and simple beings are also said to be liable to aberration, still this takes place wholly to the right side, and not in the way of action, because they have no experience of that which is on the opposite side. They are only affectable regarding the good. For their liability to deviation is checked by swift love; and where there is love, there is no struggle and no fear. Yet they are bound in nature; and from this being bound, their liability to aberration is said to originate.

Good and evil are the offspring of freedom. Where the latter is lacking, to practise the former is superfluous with respect to remuneration. For nature knows no remuneration. Reward is decreed for strife. There can be no mention of victory where there is no struggle. When opposition is removed, freedom vanishes at the same time. Then nature remains without strife. A time is reserved for the annihilation of freedom; then a limited rationality comes into existence, among men as well as among the angels. Rationality, not sensible emotionality. In conception [1]) rationality possesses two peculiarities, namely two forces, a rational and a conceiving force. The former is altogether limited. In the latter nature is complete, in so far as
205 it is conceiving. But again it is limited, not compulsorily, but rather delightfully, with a delightful bond. Sometimes this [delight] happens unto a few in this world in a symbolical way; but only in trance. Unto the primeval rational beings [this happened] without trance, as far as this was possible, though they were not perfect. What was it which happened without trance unto persons who were not perfect? There are mysteries that cannot be received before the time appointed. Those persons are imperfect therefore, who do not possess it at all, not those who possess what they do here possess, only in trance.

Therefore constancy [is necessary], rather than trance. If trance [at all], then it is for those things which are most excellent. So trance for those people was an excellent change: with us it is annihilation, because of the sickness of the flesh.

1) Anschauung.

XXX

ON THE POWER AND THE EVIL ACTION OF SIN AND CONCERNING THOSE IN WHOM IT MAINTAINS ITSELF AND THOSE IN WHOM IT IS ANNIHILATED

A man is not freed from the allurements of sin in his heart until he hates from [the depth of] his heart and sincerely the cause of sin. This causes the vehemence of the struggle which opposes man in the blood and in which his freedom is testified to through the purity of his love of virtues.

This is the power which is called seduction, by the scent of which the weak soul is defeated because of its mighty attraction. This is the strong power of sin by which it troubles the
200 serenity of the chaste and overpowers the pure emotions by things the knowledge of which they have never experienced. Here we have to show our endurance, my beloved.

This is the time of the unseen martyrdom in which the order of the solitaries is said to excel at all times. By the shock of this war the mind of the steadfast is troubled and upset, if it is not extremely watchful. Our Lord, who possessest almighty power, fountain of all help, support Thou in these times of martyrdom the souls who joyfully have betrothed themselves to thee, heavenly bridegroom, and who have given thee the promise of sanctity, in entire purity of emotions without an afterthought. Fill them with the force which subdues the resistance of fortresses and of heights that raise themselves against sanctity, lest they be driven away from their proposed aim by the unbearable compulsion of this time in which the struggle in the blood rages.

Not always does this severe strife take place in the struggle of chastity. Remittance may occur that a test may be applied. Woe to the weak who is put to the test in this decisive strife. It possesses great strength and maintains its customary force against those who have given themselves wholly, even though it be but once, to defeat, by submitting their deliberations to it.

Be on your guard against idleness, my beloved; intelligible death is hidden in it. Without it it is impossible that the solitary should fall into the hands of those who wish to captivate

him. Not that God will judge us on that day on the basis of
210 the Psalms we have recited or whether we have passed in idleness the times of service occasionally; but by our neglecting them, the demons win access. And when they have found an opportunity to enter and have shut our rooms, they accomplish in us tyrannically things which will necessarily bring their perpetrators under divine judgment in view of the severe punishment allotted for them. So we become enslaved through negligence in small matters which by the prudent are treated in a painstaking way, for the sake of Christ. As it has been said: Whosoever does not subject his will to God, he becomes a slave to his foe. We have, therefore, to consider as walls against those who desire to captivate us, those things which are reputed to be of a humble nature and which are accomplished in the cell, things which by those who maintain the strict institutes of the church have been laid down in prudence in a spirit of revelation, for the preservation of our life, the neglect of which is deemed insignificant by the imprudent, the harm of which, however, they do not consider. The beginning and the middle of their path is untrained freedom, which is the mother of wrongs. To trouble oneself with the care of small things is better than to give opportunity for sin by remissness regarding them. This is freedom at the wrong time; the end of which is grinding slavery.

As long as thy senses are alive to the shock of every accident, thy soul is to be deemed dead. For in that case the flames of sin will never be absent from thy limbs, whatever be thy states, and no peace will be able to settle in thy soul. If any of the solitaries promises in his heart to be watchful in
211 such a state, he does not desire to be conscious of punishment.

When a man deceives his companion he deserves the curse, such as is according to the law. When, however, a man deceives himself, he is not deserving those punishments; for while conscious he has made himself unconscious, because it is demanded from him that he shall eradicate the cause from his heart. But this is difficult in his eyes; and, for this reason, while conscious, he desires to be unconscious. O how sweet is the cause of affections. He will cut them off sometimes and be pleased to drive them away. Often he rejoices on account of their being apeased; to eradicate their cause he is, however, not able. Therefore we are put to the test, though it be against

our will, and are distressed by the affections although we like that their causes be strong in us.

Sins we desire not; their conductors, however, we receive with delight; so secondary reasons become a mighty cause of primary ones. For he who desires the causes of the affections, is subject to them, though not of his will.

Who hates his sins, abstains from them. He who confesses his faults, receives forgiveness. There is no abstaining from customary sins without acquiring hate, nor receiving of forgiveness without confession of faults. The latter is accompanied by true humility; the former by grief, through shame rising in the heart. So long as we have not advanced to the point of hating blameworthy things, it is not possible to perceive the foetid odour they spread when perpetrated, nor their stinking
212 smell, bearing them, as we do, in ourselves. So long as thou hast not cast evil away, thou knowest not what shame thou wilt foster nor what chastisement will rise from it. If thou seest in others that with which thou art charged, then thou knowest the shame with which thou art clad. Remove thyself from evil, then thou wilt know. For thou inhalest the foetid odour as a sweet scent, and [considerest] the nakedness of thy shame as a glorious cover.

Blessed is he that has removed himself from darkness and seen himself; so long as he is in it, sight and discernment are impossible. Blessed is he that has come forth from the dizziness of his wine and has seen in others the shamelessness of his drunkenness; then he will understand his own shame. As long as he himself is under the drunkenness of sins, all that he does is beautiful in his eyes. When nature has deviated from its order, it is all alike, to be drunk with wine or with desires; both [states] remove [a man] from what is becoming; both excite in their bearer, the body, the same heat; they are different as to their idea, but one in appearance; and one in madness. There is no equality in their causal ideas; but in their bearers there is no diversity.

All rest is followed by vexation; and all vexation by rest. If all in this world is liable to change, nevertheless man undergoes it in an attitude of opposition, either here or there or at the time of departure. This is especially the case with rest
213 from lasciviousness or vexation which precedes it, in the way of sanctity. This is administered by God with compassion, so

that man has to taste this torment either on his way or at its end; then he passes away. And on account of the richness of God's compassion He [uses] this as a means of remuneration, like a deposit; so that the wages of good do not diminish the capital; but the wages of evil do.

As has been said: He who is chastised here, diminishes [his torments in] Hell.

Beware of freedom preceding subjection, beware of consolation preceding strife. Beware of knowledge older than the shock of temptations; beware of it rather than of love preceding the accomplishment of repentance.

If all of us are sinners, and none is exalted above their experience, then none among the virtues precedes repentance. Recollect that all delight is secondary to aversion and bitterness.

Beware of joy also, to which is not joined variation without cause. Concerning all things provided from above thou wilt find the cause of their variation unattainable to knowledge. Fear that which is reputed to be joined with equality; it is said to lie besides the way which is trodden. He who knows to steer the ship of the world with prudence, has connected variation with all that belongs to Him. Different from this is likeness.

Distraction of the thoughts is connected with the rest of the limbs; dejection with immoderate labour; distraction with dejection. Distraction differs from distraction. The former is
214 accompanied by the strife of wantonness; the latter by the inclination to leave the cell and to [inhabit] various places. Moderate labour connected with constancy is priceless; where it fails, there is exuberant desire; where it prevails, there is room for trouble.

Bear the folly of nature prevailing in thy body, o brother, because thou art destined to possess that wisdom which possesses the everlasting crown of government. Be not troubled by the disturbance of the body, [the inheritance] of Adam, which is destined as soon as it is clad with that heavenly image which is the king of peace, to dwell in that delight of which the knowledge would overpower in this world the minds of those who are clad with flesh.

Be not troubled on account of the wild variations of nature. For the short duration of the labour caused by them is, to him who endures, as a delightful gift. They are hounds accustomed

to the butcher[1]); a sound from the mouth is sufficient to make them flee. But if thou shouldst condescend to have connections with them, thou wouldst make them strong lions.

Despise mean pleasures, lest thou become subjected to the force of their heat[2]). A little patience regarding small things repels the danger of the approach of large ones. It is not possible to overcome great evils without a small victory over trifling ones.

Recollect the kind of way thou wilt go, o brother; there is no longer life there sustained by chemicals driving mortality; nor warmth of temperament exciting the young nature by the allurement of its pleasure. Bear the labour of the struggle into which [He] has introduced thee in order to put thee to the
215 test; then thou wilt take the crown and pass; for after a little time thou wilt have rest from this world. Think of that rest without end, of that life without allurements, of that state of perfect manhood, of that course of life without shocks, of that compulsory force of divine love reigning over nature.

XXXI

THE STRUGGLE OR RATHER THE DANGER OF FALLING THAT EXCELLENT WORKS INCUR

It is not possible to vanquish the bad deliberations that accompany the bodily allurements; or rather it is hardly possible. They have been called by some a double weapon [directed] against us. There is no rest from them as long as there is satiety of bread, water and sleep, and access to the things that cause emotions by their accidental character. It is better to depart life than to bear shame in it. When we are anxious to fulfill our duties, the influence of the flesh will be extinguished from our limbs.

It is not possible to have care for apperceptible things and to correct our personal affections [at the same time]. For without affectionate beseechings and constant bending [of the knees] it is not possible to draw [divine] compassion towards

1) viz. the butcher's shop
2) when it has grown strong

us; and thus it is necessary to practise them constantly. Without painstaking in small things it is not possible to escape great evils.

XXXII

ON THE AIM OF GUARDING THE HEART AND ON SUBTLE SPECULATION THAT LOOKS INTO THE APARTMENT

Let there not be hidden to thy knowledge the power that lies in spiritual songs, when we use it with understanding. For it turns the deliberation away from the world. It also drives distraction from the mind, though it is reputed to be useful for children [only]. The unsteady mind profits by it at once. Spiritual allurements are more valuable against the affections than the force of knowledge. When thou art alone, guard thy heart by them if thou possessest not yet the force to be watchful in thy being, through contemplation which is familiar intercourse with the knowledge of discernment; or — if this is not [sufficient] — by the constant recollection of the departure from the body and by the recollection of things expected and hoped for; this must be accompanied by [the fulfilling of] the duties which cause delight, namely: the withdrawal from things which cause emotions, and the little observances within the cell. If, after long slavery, thou findest that thy harbour is to be reached with freedom, pursue it [in this way]. If thou seest that this is a foolish method, combine it with [the practice of] the law. For here it is easy to be rectified.

While with these and such variations thou advancest with insight, in a ship loaded with the treasures of the cell — a great festival full of the merchandise of the virtuous — then look with subtlety at the unequal children which are born to thee from apperceptible variations. Thou wilt namely see how every spiritual delight is preceded by the pains of the cross;
217 how the pleasure of sin, however, is born from bodily comfort; [and thou wilt see] why in the harbour of chastity, spiritual love is caused by spiritual contemplation, which heals the mind. There is nothing secondary without a preceding cause, nor a third virtue without a foregoing one. Thou wilt find growing

in the womb of chastity the wings with which the mind ascends unto divine love, in which one may venture to approach the cloud.

This insight will give a man a considerable force, so as to mingle watchfulness with his affairs, and incitement unto zealous efforts.

Behaviour without eyes will prove idle. For it quickly brings about dejectedness on account of distraction. Pray our Lord that He endow thy behaviour with eyes. Then joy will begin to sprout; then troubles will become sweet to thee as honey comb; then thou wilt think thy enclosure a festival chamber.

It is not possible to vanquish the affections without apperceptible virtues, nor fortuitous distraction without intercourse with spiritual knowledge. Our mind is an agile thing; if it is not bound to an object with discernment, it will not cease to be distracted. And if the antecedents have not been fulfilled, there is no room for such a process. For there is no peace without victory over the enemies. And if peace does not reign, [how is it possible] to find that which lies beyond peace?

Affections are the fence of hidden virtues. If they are not vanquished first by the manifest virtues, it is not possible to see
218 what lies within them. For it is not possible for one standing without a wall, to speak about what is within. It is not possible to see the sun in a cloud, nor the natural virtues of the soul among the trouble of perpetual affections.

Pray God that He may give thee to perceive spiritual allurements. If these take hold of thy soul the world will depart from thee and thou from the world. But they cannot be perceived without solitude and emaciation and attentive intercourse with recitation. Without the latter thou must not pray for the former. If thou prayest for the former without [these virtues], they will change quickly and become of a bodily nature. Who is able to understand, will understand. It has pleased the wise Lord that we should eat this bread with sweat; not for malignity, but lest we should be attacked by a malady of the stomach and die.

Every virtue which is the mother of a second, which is anterior to it, is a viper to the souls of those who find it, if they do not cast it from them quickly.

XXXIII

ON THE ACTION OF DIVINE LOVE

Now that we have written the above [1]) about spiritual allurements, it is time to explain [this idea]. It is a dim power which arises from love in the heart, at first without sensible causes, for it sets in motion the temperament, without personal vision or practical understanding or reasoning. And therefore it is thought to be without cause, because the mind is still vague.

219 This is its impression on the untrained. To the perfect the cause is revealed later, in connection with examination of it; and then the [impression] is still stronger, for delight is moving in the heart. A part of it is reserved in the body by the recipient; and another part is sent to the psychic forces. For the heart is in the middle between psychic and bodily apperceptions; to the former it belongs organically, to the latter naturally. And the recipient directs the taste of its action towards both sides. Therefore the world is compelled to depart from it as it itself departs from the things of the world. We must necessarily inquire into the cause [of this phenomenon]. Love is something hot by nature. And when it alights on any one without measure, it renders that soul as it were mad. Therefore the heart that perceives it, cannot contain and bear it without unusual excessive variations becoming manifest in it. And these signs it publishes in an apperceptible way, openly: at once the face becomes reddy and joyous, the body grows hot; fear and bashfulness are thrown away and it becomes as it were wanton; the power of concentration flees; impetuosity and disturbance reign. His own life forthwith is estimated as nothing in comparison with his Friend. Therefore even death, which was more dreadful to him than any thing, is the same to him as pleasure. And with all this, the gaze of the mind is not free from fantastic thoughts on Him. Afar, he speaks with Him as with one who is near. His knowledge inquires into the hidden state of Him who is concealed from sight. His

1) End of chapter XXXII

220 gaze is natural and hostile to sensual apperception. In his actions, as in his sight, he is enflamed. He dwells in solitude, and deliberation entertains itself as it were with a partner and is stupefied.

This passion has enebriated martyrs and, driven by it, apostles have travelled through the whole earth in trance, the saints have been tormented, have suffered derision and were erring in the wilderness. Composed, they have become deranged; wise, they have wilfully become foolish; bashful, they have become wanton with discernment; exempt from affections [they have walked] in the flesh. Constantly demanding, they have become quiet without compulsion. May we be worthy to reach their madness by the compassion of our adorable God. Amen [1]).

If thou considerest thyself as having peace from the assault of the affections, before thou hast entered the town of humility, do not trust this. There is some ambush prepared for thee. Expect, after this peace, great trouble from them. While passing along all the apartments of virtues, thou wilt not find rest
221 from thy tribulations nor relief from thy persecutors, till thy course will have reached the apartment of humility.

XXXIV

ON THE NATURAL CHILDREN OF VIRTUES AND THE LIKE

Asceticism is the mother of saintliness; from it is born the taste of the first apperception of the divine mysteries and it is called the first period of spiritual knowledge. That no one deceive himself and become a false prophet. For the impure soul does not ascend to the pure kingdom, neither in the symbolical nor in the common sense, and it cannot mingle with the holy spirits. But when the elements have mingled with their relatives, the distinction of the natural unity being

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1) In the text there follows: "who has taken a mediator from our race and given us these things through his hand; who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4, 15). On account of the equality of his natural flesh with ours, eternally without mixture, in the unity preserving the properties of the natures, He has made himself worthy of sitting to the right hand. Therefore praise and power and adoration to Him, now and in life without end for ever and ever". The passage is lacking in the Greek translation and looks like a Nestorian addition.

preserved, that miserable [soul] will be preserved for the great future judgment.

Keep pure, o brother, the beauties of thy chastity, by tears and fasting and sitting alone by thyself. When the right course of the natural sphere has been finished and [the soul] has reached that great luminary, which supports the spheres of the stars multitudinous in their personal distinctions, as Paul says in order to prove the future resurrection, and when it has mingled with its rays — I do not mean in the natural sense — then the vehicle of the will shall be bound with the bonds of unconsciousness and the two exuberant fountains will dry up in their basins. And then the priests will leave the sanctuary on
222 account of the cloud of God's majesty [1]). At that time the king of Israel will be Solomon, viz. that peace which is born from humility; he will build a house for the Lord and completely provide it with all the sacred vessels.

A little trouble for God's sake is more excellent in God's eyes than much service without suffering. Because trouble borne from free will is a manifestation of love. Service in comfort, however, rises from inward satiety. Therefore by troubles, not by service with satiety the saints were tested concerning the love of Christ. Service without labour is the righteousness of lay people who wish to be justified on account of what they possess, but do not acquire excellency in their person.

Thou, however, who art victorious, taste the suffering of Christ in thy person, that thou also mayest be deemed worthy of tasting His glory. For if we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified with Him. The mind cannot be glorified with Jesus, if the body does not suffer for Jesus. He who despises glory will receive glory at the same time. He will be glorified in his body as well as in his soul. The glory of the body is humble subjection before God. The glory of the mind is true contemplation concerning God. Right subjection is twofold; it follows from labour and from disdain, so that when the body suffers, the heart also suffers with it.

If thou doest not know God, it is not possible that His love should be excited in thee. It is not possible for thee to love God, if thou hast not seen God. Thou seest Him as soon as
223 thou knowest Him. Sight is not prior to knowledge. Make me

1) Allusion to 1 Kings 8, 11

worthy of knowing Thee, my Lord, then I shall love Thee too. [I do not desire] that knowledge which arises amidst distractions of the mind, in the training of instruction. But make me worthy of that knowledge by which the mind, while gazing at Thee, will be glorifying thy nature; gazing with that gaze which banishes from the mind the apperception of the world. Make me worthy of becoming exalted above arbitrary sight from which come phantastic thoughts, so that I gaze at Thee by the compulsion of the bonds of the cross, the latter half of which is the crucifixion of the mind whose position of freedom is annihilated by the service of the impulses, with that gaze which nature gives not, but is constantly directed towards Thee. Place in me the pure metal of Thy love, so that, following Thee, I become alienated from the world. Move in me the understanding of Thy humility by which Thou hast lived in the world clad with the cover taken from our limbs, that by the constant and never weakening remembrance of it I may accept with delight the humiliation of my nature.

Two are the parts of the ascension on the cross. One is the crucifixion of the body. The second is the ascension unto contemplation; but the former is a matter of freedom; the latter of influence.

The mind will not be subjected, if the body is not subjected. The reign of the mind is the crucifixion of the body. The mind is not subjected unto God, if freedom has not been subjected to reason.

It is hard to trust an elevated matter to boyish rank. For woe to thee, O town, when thy king is a child [1]).

He who subjects himself, nearly all will be subjected unto him. He who knows himself, the knowledge of all things will
224 be given him. The word ‚know thyself' means the accomplishment of all knowledge. As all is encompassed in thy being, so in the knowledge of thy being all knowledge is encompassed, and in the subjection of thy being, the subjection of all the world. At the time when humility dominates thy behaviour, thy being will be subjected to thee, and with it everything, because in the heart a divine peace will be born. As this has not yet happened to thee, thou art perpetually persecuted not only by the affections, but also by accidents. Verily,

1) Ecclesiastes 10, 16.

O Lord, if we do not humble ourselves, thou ceasest not to humble us. True humility is the offspring of knowledge; right knowledge the offspring of temptations.

XXXV

A TREATISE IN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING CONSTANT BEHAVIOUR AND EVERY KIND OF EXCELLENCE WHICH IS EMINENTLY USEFUL FOR THOSE WHO HAVE STRIPPED OFF THE WORLD AND DWELL IN THE WILDERNESS, FOR RECLUSES AND FOR THOSE WHO IN VOLUNTARY MORTIFICATION AT ALL TIMES EXPECT THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The disciple says: Which are the bonds captivating the mind [and withholding it] from running after evil things?

The teacher says: The constant search after wisdom and desire for the teachings of life. For bonds stronger than these against the unruliness of mind do not exist.

The disciple says: Where is the limit of the course of
225 wisdom for those who seek it, and where does the course of teachings end?

The teacher says: The way of this course is foreign to any limit, to such an extent that even the holy angels do not reach perfection. The course of wisdom is without end. It ascends to such a height that it mingles with God him that follows it. And even this is a sign of its unlimitedness, that its distinctions are without end; wisdom is God.

The disciple: What is the first and principal way leading towards wisdom?

The teacher: That a man seeks God with all his might and that he is quick in seeking Him with his whole person, so that he even does not dislike to give up and throw down his life on account of his love.

The disciple. To whom is it becoming to be called a man of understanding?

The teacher. He that really understands that there is a limit to his earthly life, is also able to put a limit to his sins. What knowledge or understanding is greater than this, that a man has wisdom to depart this life without harm, while his limbs are

are not strained with the odour of desires, nor his soul with the filth of their sweetness? If a man subdues his impulses in order to penetrate into the mysteries of all classes of beings, and is filled with insight into all kinds of knowledge, so to say, yet his soul is defiled by the filth of sin so that he cannot hope on account of the witness of his soul that he shall safely reach the harbour of trust — then there is none more foolish among the creatures than such a man who, though being constantly occupied
226 by his works, is brought by them to the hope of this world only.

The disciple. Who is really strong?

The teacher. He that during the temporary troubles by which the glory of his victorious power is hidden, does not long after the comfort by which a shameful life is enveloped and which at all times compels those who find it, to drink the goblet of sighs.

The disciple. Is it harmful to his course towards God, if a man makes a pause is his labour?

The teacher. It is not possible for a man to come near to Christ without troubles, nor can his righteousness be preserved unchanged without them. When righteousness already acquired is bereft of labours which served to augment and at the same time to guard it, it resembles a treasure which of a sudden finds itself without guardians, or an athlete who is stripped of his arms while a host of enemies surrounds him; or a ship that is left in the ocean without the utensils of her equipment; or a garden rich in fruits from which is cut off the fountain that watered it.

The disciple. Who is the illuminated in his impulses?

The teacher. He who is able to understand the bitterness hidden in the sweetness of the world and who withholds his mouth from drinking its goblet. Who zealously enquires after the salvation of his life and who does not cease from running, up to the day on which he is freed from the world; who shuts the gates of his senses, lest the love of the world enter and dwell within him and bereave him of his hidden treasures.

The disciple. What is the world and how can we recog-
227 nize it and how can it do harm to those who love it?

The teacher. The world is a whore and by the desire of its beauty it attracts those who see it so that they love it. And he that during a short time has been entangled in its love is not able to escape from its hands, before it has stripped him even of his life and sends him from its house through

death, bereaved of all. But a man recognizes it as soon as he endeavours to leave its darkness. Then he is able to see the many cords of its nets. As long as he is in it, he cannot see its ensnarements. For it is not only its disciples and sons and captives which are within its fortress, but also the renunciators, ascetics and those who have once broken its bonds and were once above it — those also it now gradually begins to entangle in its service, making them litter for its feet.

The disciple. Now that thou hast convinced me of the fact that the world really suffocates those who dwell in it and of how difficult it is to understand its artificial bonds, I beg to learn first, what is the first impulse to the mind's doubt concerning the world, since its bonds are so very sweet and the schemes of its fetters are hidden?

The teacher. When the deliberation of the love of his soul awakens in him, this impulse of deliberation begins to make the world hated in his eyes and it throws into him doubt concerning it.

228 The disciple. Whence comes this emotionality which brings about that which appeared always praiseworthy and beautiful, now suddenly appears as ugly, so that he repents his life and his previous knowledge, thinking that he did not think rightly concerning the world?

The teacher. In the first place it is nature which beakoning to him in silence, awakens in him the critical impulse as to the unstable duration of the world and of the future and of its course; and as to the ephemere nature of those who enter into it, so that he considers this world as a place of transition for those who enter into it; as also for the many generations before him, the number of which is unlimited. They have entered it as an inn for a night and left it as travellers on a journey over the whole earth, without thinking of return. Some of them kings, some governors, some wise, some honoured. Some of them scribes, some orators, some judges, some commanders of armies. Some of them possessors of riches, some lords of goods. And now after their death there is neither the order of their degrees, nor the crowns of their government, nor their dreadful thrones, nor their lordly pleasures, nor the praise of those who honoured them, nor the love of their friends, nor the luxuriant pleasures of their bodies, nor the comely beauty of their grace, nor their proud majestic stature, nor their erudite

mind, nor their spirit rich in impulses, nor the rich effusions
229 of the Gihon of their learning which streamed from their mouth and captivated by its grace the heart of the hearers.

They have slept in Sheol for long years as if it were one night. And it is not known how many years they yet have of this long sleep, nor when the dawn of resurrection will rise for them and awaken them from their slumber. And to consider for what purpose they are left in this state, causes great suffering; and he will think of how many generations are cloistered under this earth, forgotten [now]. And I too will pass as any one of them. Cursed be riches and comfort. And under this deliberation, great confusion will arise in his heart and his spirit will be filled with suffering. And on account of the severity of suffering he will pour forth tears in great sorrow. Then he will despise the world and bewail his life and lament over his soul with various bitter lamentations. And with sighs he will say to himself: Where wilt thou be, my miserable soul and where wilt thou find thyself after my death? Perhaps even this deliberation will rise in him: Would I had not entered the world of creatures and I had not left the womb!

In this kind of lamentation he will shed sweet tears because of the sorrow of his heart, and moisten his garments with his tears. And forthwith this world will be in his eyes as a prison and its first sweetness will be more bitter than any bitter thing and the love of his life and its desirable beauty will seem the type of hell.

Then his mind will turn to scripture which will awake in
230 him faith in the resurrection and the end awaiting all the things of this world, and in the promises given to those who have lived well in the world and the divine judgments threatened against the transgressors of the law and against those who, during their short lifetime have lived in the broad way of sin. And then, as one who has discovered some light, he throws away the burden of sorrow, and great joy is awakened in him, because he has found a hope, excellent and true. These things and the like, nature is not able to prompt from his inward emotion: they are understood from the words of scripture by faith alone. Man is not able to acquire instruction concerning himself wholly from nature and from the critical impulses which are within him. Concerning the dealings of God in the Past and in the Future we are able to gain this in-

struction from the scriptures or from spiritual revelation. Then by the rays of faith and scripture the eye of the spirit will be enlightened and the natural critical faculty will radiate and man will be incited to care for his soul. And further he will think of means to make his life free from the world, so that, before departing the body, he will be able to prepare for himself provisions useful for the world to be.

The disciple. How can man wholly give up the world?

The teacher. By desire of the future good that is recollected, which divine scripture sows in his heart with the sweetness of its words full of hope. When the things that are thought to be glorious and delightful and in which man is entangled, are not contrasted with the desire of still more excellent things,
231 the spirit is not able to despise its former love.

The disciple. But nature is weak and not able to give up suddenly all its former customs and embrace a life of troubles.

The teacher. If the greatness of the future life does not cause a man's spirit in the greatness of wisdom to compare it with the miserable shortness of this temporal life, it is not possible for him to take heart to bear troubles in order to begin his course on the way of the new world. Pray, compute in thy mind the number of years of this our place and elevate thyself as much as possible, and compare it with the days of the future world, and say whether that which thou givest is equal to what thou wilt receive.

And, considering what thou leavest and what thou wilt receive in stead of it, say whether thy exchange is an equal one. Therefore the wise, while he wonders at the greatness of that world and its unlimited life over against the shortness of temporal life, will say: The number of man's days if he lives long, are a hundred years [1]); this is like filling a bucket from the sea or taking one corn of sand. A thousand years in this world is not as much as one day in the world of the righteous [2]).

The disciple. And what shall we do with the body? As soon as it is surrounded by distress, the desire of the will towards the good is relaxed as well as its former zeal.

232 The teacher. This will usually happen to those the half of whose being has sought God, whereas the other half has remained in the world. This means that their heart is not yet

1) Cf. Ps. 90, 10 2) Cf. Ps. 84, 11

free from earthly things, but they are in doubt, sometimes looking behind, sometimes forward; and I think that the sage admonishes those who approach the way of God in this state of indecision, saying: Do not approach it doublehearted, but approach it as one who sows or as one who reaps. And our Lord, seeing that among those who wish to renunciate completely, there are some in such a state of mind, that their will is ready but their thoughts are drawn backwards by fear of troubles, on account of their love of the body which they have not yet thrown away — He will take from them this lassitude of mind saying to them briefly: If any man will come after me, let him first deny himself[1]. What is the denial that is spoken of here? It is the denial of the flesh. And one who is destined to suffer crucifixion, he accepts the thought of death, and goes forth, as one who does not think that he has any further share in this life. This is [what is meant by] taking up the cross and following me. The cross denotes the will prepared for any trouble. And declaring why this is so, He says: Whoever will save his soul in this world, will lose it in the true
333 life[2]. And whoever will lose his individuality here for my sake, will find it there. This means: he that sets his steps on the way of crucifixion and yet still cares to think of this bodily life, bereaves his soul of the faith for which to suffer he is gone out. Because this thought does not allow him to approach trouble; but, being always with him, allures him gradually and makes him leave the centre of the struggle for blessed life. Such thoughts grow in him till they have overpowered him. But he whose mind has complied with the loss of his self for the sake of finding the love of Me, he will be preserved, without harm, for life everlasting. This is, he who gives up his life for my sake will find it'.

This means: make free thy soul as it were from thyself and prepare it for a complete loss of life. If the departure from this life finds thee in this state of mind, I will give thee life everlasting, according to my promise. And if thou perseverest in this life, I will show my promise in thee later as a confirmation of the future goods. Therefore, thou wilt find that immortal life when thou despisest temporal life. If thou enterest the strife with such a preparation, all that was most sorrowful and

1) Matthew 16, 24 2) Matthew 10, 39

difficult, will be contemptible in thy eyes. The preparation of such a will even is not a struggle for his life in his mind,
234 even when peril of death threatens him. In short: If a man does not hate his temporal life, because of love of the future life, he cannot bear troubles.

The disciple. In what way can a man cut off his former customs and accustom himself to a life of privation?

The teacher. The body is not to be persuaded to live in need, so long as it is surrounded by things of luxury and relaxation. For the sight of [worldly] things, their splendour and existence kindles in it a desire for them. Therefore justly our Saviour has commanded those who follow Him, in the first place to renunciate and to leave the world. First He frees them from the causes of relaxation; then He commands them to begin work. And our Lord himself, when He began His strife with the Devil, combated him in the dry and desert wilderness. And Paul also commands those who bear the cross of Christ to leave the town. So we will leave the town with Him, bearing his disdain, which He also suffered without the town.

By the abandonment of the world and what belongs to it, man easily forgets his former customs and his trouble will not last a long time. But the coming near to [worldly] things easily relaxes the fervour of the spirit. It is also becoming and very profitable in the strife, that a man's life be ordered with the utmost privation and indigence, free from all things that
235 excite [the desire of] comfort. When thus the causes leading towards relaxation are removed from man, he will not be tormented by the double strife, the outward and the inward one. Lo, how much easier is the strife if the things a man desires are afar off and not near, alluring the thoughts by their aspect.

Thus we see that there is a double strife. When a man's way of life is poor and his wants are small, he will not look with desire at these things even when indigent and he will content his body with little, because even the body is despised and contemptible in his eyes; and he does not approach unto it because of its beauty and the pleasure it gives, but only in order to sustain nature.

These ways easily lead man to asceticism, without harm and strife and deliberations. It is becoming for a man to refrain from the sight of those and to remain far from those things,

against contact with which he can be on his guard only with a great effort. This I do not say in view of things of the belly only, but also in view of those things which by their temptation put to the test the solitary's freedom and the avoiding of which he has promised in his bond with God. So I mean also the sight of a woman's face, the sight of superb things, superb persons and their luxury, splendid persons and their garments, all things belonging to worldliness also speaking and hearing concerning them. For the affections possess a strong power,
236 when [worldly] things are near, to weaken the stragglers and to turn aside their mind. If the sight of beautiful things spurs on the mind to follow their service with zeal, it is well known that also those which are the contrary of beautiful, have the power of captivating the mind. And if further harm does not happen than that the quiet mind is cast into strife, there is this loss at any rate, that a man by his own will is thrown from peace into perturbation.

If one of the saints, an industrious father, thought the sight of a man with a womanlike face a harm for the mind and an injury in the strife, when once he approached one of the convents, who then should neglect other [dangers]; for this blessed man was not to be persuaded even to enter and prostrate himself there. This wise father deliberated with insight thus: 'if it should come to my memory even only in the night I pass here, that there is here such a thing, this would be a great loss'. And therefore he did not enter the convent. 'I am not afraid, my brethren' [he said]. 'But wherefore useless strife'? This means, that even such recollections hinder the serenity of my service.

For all the things which belong to this body and against which a man must guard himself by a great effort, will cause him little strife as long as they are at a distance from him. Thus even when they are near, so long as a man uses the pleasant things [of this world] with fear, he desires their proximity only because of the use which is in them.

237 We see that many roots are buried and hidden under the earth, of which no one has any knowledge as to their existence while it is summer, because of the force of the sun and the strength of heat. But when the raindrops reach them and the influence of the fragrant air, then all of them suddenly begin to show themselves wherever they are buried. Doest thou not

see, that by the strong heat of asceticism and the rays of the grace of solitude, the affections leave thee in quiet; but if thou approachest the things [of the world], thou shalt see that all of them are quickened and thrust up their heads from their places, that is: if they smell just a little of the odour of comfort.

These things I have said in order to show that no one should have confidence before he dies and departs this life and how helpful in our strife flight and withdrawal from the world are. Those things which we are ashamed to recollect secretly, we must also fear to meet. And we may not tread down the heart and despise conscience. For in a lonely place without contact [with the world] we have to examine our body in order to acquire training in endurance.

There is also another thing, more important than the rest: namely as often as that which is a cause of strife, is afar from a man, even if he be vexed in mind he will not fear that, vanquished by desire, he might employ it on account of its being near.

238 The disciple. If a man has thrown away all impediments and has entered the arena, what is the beginning of his strife against sin, and where does he start fighting?

The teacher. This much is known to every one, that all strife against sin and its desires is to be preceded by the labour of fasting, especially if one is combating inward sin. And the token of hate against sin and its desires, visible in those who are engaged in this invisible strife, is this that they begin with fasting.

Afterwards comes standing during the night. He that during his whole life loves the use of fasting, is a friend of chastity. As at the root of all the boons of the world and of all its evils, is sexual pleasure and the relaxation of sleep which incites to impure cohabitation, so the beginning of the holy way of God and of all virtues, is founded upon fasting and strict punctuality in the service of God, with the crucifixion of the body during the whole night in the strife against the pleasure of sleep.

Fasting is a strengthening of all the virtues, the beginning of the struggle, the crown of the Naziracans, the beauty of virginity and sanctity, the preservation of chastity, the beginning of the way of Christianity, the father of prayer, the fountain

of placidity, the teacher of quiet, and the forerunner of all good qualities. As the delight of light belongs to sound eyes, so the desire of prayer follows fasting with discernment. For as soon as a man begins to fast, his mind forthwith will be desirous of intercourse with God. A fasting body cannot endure lying on its bed during the whole night. For fasting naturally excites vigilance unto God; not only by day, but also during the night. And the empty body of him that fasts does not grow fatigued in the struggle against sleep. And though his senses are weak, his mind is awake unto God in beseechings. It is better to neglect service for weakness caused by fasting, than on account of indolence caused by food.

To dwell at length upon the beauties of fasting is not necessary. Many of the teachers and fathers have spoken about the victories of fasting and the many beautiful things originating in it. And all books inform us concerning the importance of fasting and the victories it has given generation after generation, and concerning the mighty help afforded by it, and the high praise deserved by those who fast. And by experience it is known to every one, that it is the fountain of all good [qualities].

As long as the seals of fasting are on a man's mouth, his mind meditates on the soul's penitence, his heart sends forth prayers and his face is dark with sadness. Evil impulses are afar from him; neither is gladness seen on his brow at all. For he is an enemy of desires and idle occupations. There has never been seen a man who was fasting with discernment who was subjected to evil desire. For fasting is a storehouse of all virtues. And he that despises it, makes all virtues totter.

As the first commandment imposed upon our nature in the beginning was against the tasting of the food, and in this point the head of our race fell, therefore those who strive for the fear of God begin the building there where the first injury originated, when they begin the task of keeping His commandments. And also our Saviour, when He manifested Himself to the world at the Jordan, began from that point. For when He had been baptised, the spirit led Him into the wilderness, and then He fasted forty days and forty nights. And all those who follow His steps, base the beginning of their struggle upon this action. That weapon was polished by God, who should despise it without being blameworthy? If the lawgiver has fasted, to

which guardian of the law is it not necessary to do likewise?

Till then the human race had not known victory, and Satan had never experienced defeat on the part of our nature; through this weapon, however, he was vanquished for the first time and the first victory was won which set the crown on the head of our nature. — Thus it is that as soon as this weapon appears in the hand of a man, immediately fear falls upon the deliberations of Satan, that head of rebellion, and at once his mind is struck by the recollection of that defeat in the desert and that first defeat he had to suffer. His strength will be broken when he sees the weapon which our commander has placed in our hands. As soon as he sees this weapon worn by any man, he knows that this one is prepared for the strife. What weapon is stronger than this and which gives encouragement to the heart in the struggle with evil spirits as hunger for Christ's sake does? To the degree in which a man's body is fatigued and kept down at the time when the hosts of Satan surround him, to the same degree his heart is supported by confidence. And he that is constantly in this state, will at all times be burning with zeal as it were with fire.

Constant fasting is a symptom of zeal and fervour in war. Even that zealot Eliyah took upon him this tribulation when he fought for the divine law. Forty days he restrained his mouth from food, during the long walk through the desert.

Fasting reminds those who practise it of the spiritual commandments; for it was a mediator in the ancient law and by the grace of our Lord Jesus we have received it. But what more shall I say concerning its merits which are known to every one? He that despises fasting, will also be weak and without vigour in the other good works, because he lacks the weapon by means of which the godlike athletes have been victorious. And he that from the beginning shows in himself a sign of relaxation, gives his adversary a chance of victory and enters battle in a state of deprivation. And it is certain that he will leave it, without the victory, because he has bereaved himself of the force which divine zeal had stirred in him. Thus he begins strife in a state of cold in stead of in a state of heat. For his limbs are not clad with the flame of hunger, namely of fasting during which the mind endures the strokes of all hard and unexpected events motionless.

It is said concerning many of the holy martyrs that, when

242 they were informed by a spiritual revelation or by one of their friends, regarding the day on which they would receive the crown, they did not taste anything the preceding night, nor did they take any food. But from the eve till morn they would stand in prayer, awake, praising God in songs and glorifications and hymns and spiritual melodies, being joyful and exalting and expecting that moment as people destined to enter a bridal house. They expected, while in a state of fasting, to receive the blow of the sword and to be crowned with the crown of the confessorship.

And we too have to keep this state of preparation perpetually, o my brethren, expecting invisible martyrdom and the winning of the crown of holiness, [being on our guard] lest in any of our limbs a sign of unbelief be given to our enemies. Thus our outward senses and our inward impulses being clad with all the weapons of God, we shall receive this crown deserving it and so we shall go in unto His glory with the holy martyrs, striking our enemies with amazement. For without labour nobody wins the crown, as the teacher, the great Diodorus [1]) says. For it is well known that it would be most unworthy that merchants may not bring home riches without labour and dangerous storms, and that yet the righteous should expect the remuneration of the crown, without injury and labour for the sake of righteousness.

243 The disciple. Many are those who perform these labours, yet do not perceive rest as to the affections, nor peace as to the deliberations.

The teacher. The affections hidden in the soul, o my brother, cannot be apeased by the works of solitaries which are performed with the body alone, nor do these hinder the deliberations from being constantly stirred by the senses. These labours guard man against being vanquished by desires and against harm caused by the demons. But they do not give peace and rest unto the soul too. Labours cause apathy and mortify our limbs on the earth and give rest on the part of deliberations, only if they are combined with solitude, when also the outward senses rest from turbulance and have become addicted during some time, to the service of wisdom. Until a man refrains from meeting his fellow-man and until he checks

1) One of the London Mss. has: Basil

his limbs from mingling with many things, and concentrates his self, — he will not be acquainted with his affections. For solitude, the blessed Basilius, the shining torch of the whole world, says — is the beginning of the purification of the soul. For when the outward senses have rest from outward turbulence, then the mind will return from distraction unto its place and the heart will be stirred to examine the inner impulses of the soul; and if it perseveres well it will reach in its course even the purification of the soul.

The disciple. Is it not possible for the soul, if it be strong, to be purified while having connections with the outward world?

The teacher. If a tree is watered every day, when will
244 its roots become dried up? A vessel whose contents increase daily, when will it be empty? If purity be nothing else than to forget the dealings belonging to non-freedom and to have peace from their recollection, and if a man, either personally and practically, or through others, renews in his soul by the medium of the senses this recollection, viz. the knowledge of evil things, when shall he be purified from them? Or when shall he be liberated from the strife with outward things, so that it will be possible to see inward things and gain peace? When the heart is defiled every day, when can it be purified from filth?

Perhaps it cannot even dominate practice, not to speak of purifying the root. For it stands in the centre of the camp and every day its ears are struck by the rumour of battles, how then can it venture to proclaim peace to itself? But if it be far from these, then it will be able to grant peace to the inward things gradually. Before the stream from above has been shut off, the nether waters will not dry up.

But when a man has found solitude, the soul is able to expel the affections and to test its own wisdom. Then the inward man will be stirred unto spiritual service and day by day he will perceive the hidden wisdom moving in his soul.

The disciple. What are the true marks and the undubitable signs that from a man's labour the hidden fruits are beginning to show themselves in the soul?

The teacher. When he is deemed worthy of the gift of
245 tears, flowing abundantly and without compulsion. Tears are to the mind the sure distinction between the bodily and the spiritual state, between the state of apperception and that of purity. As long as one has not yet received this gift, the

labour of his service is still in the outward man, and this to such an extent that he does not even perceive anything of the hidden service of the spiritual man. When he begins to leave the bodiliness of this world and moves in that territory which lies beyond this visible nature, then at once he will reach the grace of tears. And from the first apartment of that hidden behaviour these tears will begin and they will conduct him to the complete love of God. When he has reached this point, tears will be so copious that he drinks them with his food and his drink, so constant and abundant are they. This is a true token of the mind's leaving this world and its apperceiving the spiritual world. And the more the mind approaches unto this world, the more these tears will diminish. And when the mind is wholly in the worldly things, it will also be completely without tears, and this is the sign of its being enveloped by the affections.

Some tears cause a burning heat, others render fat. All tears which flow for grief and distress of heart caused by sins, make the body lean and burning with heat. And often when these tears are shed, one will even feel that his marrow is injured. Man will necessarily enter this order of tears first.
246 Then by them the gate leading to the second order will be opened for him, an order which is by far superior, because it contains the sign of the receiving of mercy. What is this? Those tears which have their origin in insight, make the body fat; they flow spontaneously and compulsion has no share in them. They also anoint the body and the aspect of the face is changed. For a joyful heart renders the body beautiful. These tears moisten the whole face when the mind lives in solitude. The body acquires by them as it were some sustenance and joy is diffused over the face. Whosoever has experienced these two varying states, will understand.

The disciple. What is the resurrection of the soul, namely if ye be risen with Christ? [1])

The teacher. This is what is said by the apostle in another place: For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts [2]). Resurrection he calls leaving the old state, which in the likeness of Hell hindered him from seeing the light of the Gospel rise, so to say, which

1) Colossi. 3, 1 2) 2 Cor. 4, 6

is the breath of life in the hope of the resurrection by which the dawn of divine wisdom rises in the heart, so that he now is a new man in whom is nothing of this world. As it has been said: A new heart also will I give you; and a new spirit will I put within you[1]). Then in truth Christ is imprinted on them, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in knowledge concerning Him.

The disciple. What is, in short terms, the power of the practice of solitude?

247 The teacher. It mortifies the outward senses and quickens the inward impulses. Intercourse, however, works in the inverse way.

The disciple. What is the cause of the visions and revelations granted unto some? To others however, who have laboured more than the former, such things are not granted.

The teacher. The causes of revelations and visions are many, not one. The first cause of revelations and visions is God's will to give a token of His mercy; in this case God provided men with them in order to help them. Some take place on account of divine providence. These are the common cases. The rest take place in order to strengthen and to encourage the weak, and to console and instruct them.

[An instance of those revelations which take place by] providence are the angels which were seen at the side of the grave, and those which at the Assumption appeared unto the Apostles who were both distressed and stupefied and in confusion on account of the Lord's departure from them. And at once two angels appeared who stood by them in white apparel, and those which appeared in the prison and in any place where [the apostles] fell into the hands of men. Unto single persons and unto the other saints after them they appeared, and even to this day. For these three classes of men such visitations are usually provided: for those who are simple and irreproachable above measure; or for holy and perfect persons; or for those who on account of fervent zeal have fled from
248 the world; abandoning it entirely in despair and retiring from any part inhabited by men, following God, naked, without hope or help from anything visible, assailed by the fear of desolation or surrounded by the peril of death from hunger or illness or

1) Ez. 36, 26

any evil whatever and near to dejection. That such consolations happen to some people, whereas others who are their superiors in works remain without anything of that kind, is in the first place founded on purity or non-purity of the heart, I mean. A second cause is certainly this, that as long as a man receives consolation from his fellow-man or from any of these visible things, such [heavenly] consolations do not happen to him, safe only by providential decree and this bears a common character.

But our discourse is for solitaries. A witness to this is one of the saints who has announced that there came a voice unto him saying: Enough of consolation from and intercourse with men! Another witness [1]) to this is he who led a solitary life in reclusion, and often tasted from consolations granted by grace, and divine care often became visible to him in manifest apperception; but when he came near the inhabited world and sought these things as usual, he did not find them. He besought God that the truth concerning this matter might become
249 known to him, saying: Perhaps, my Lord, grace has been withdrawn from me on account of my episcopal rank? It was said to him: No. But then, there was the desert, there were no men, but God provided for thee. Now, there is the inhabited world and men provide for thee. — So we say that it is impossible for a man to share in visible as well as in spiritual consolation.

The disciple. Are vision and revelation one, or are they different in fact as they are different in names?

The teacher. There is a difference between vision and revelation. The name of revelation covers the two, because it denotes the revealing of a thing that hitherto was hidden and now becomes manifest in any way. But not all that is revelation is at the same time vision. But what is vision is also called revelation, because it is a hidden thing which is revealed. But not all that comes to be revealed and known, is vision.

Revelation is usually connected with what is intelligible and tasted with the intellect. Vision, however, always happens in similitudes; as those things which were ministered unto the ancients, be it in the depth of sleep, or in the state of waking; sometimes clearly, at other times dimly, while he to whom the

1) See Introduction

vision was given often did not know whether he saw awake or in sleep. Even after he had regained consciousness, he did not know whether the thing had in reality happened to him, or as in a dream. Sometimes a voice of help was heard;
250 sometimes a symbolical representation was seen; sometimes there was a clear apparition, face to face, and sight and speech, questions and intercourse; and those holy hosts appeared to those who were worthy. It is clear that in the desert and the wilderness and in lonely places and in places of retreat from the world, such things happen; where man decidedly needs them, because he has no help from any side.

Revelation of those things which are apperceived intellectually, is received through purity. And the latter only belongs to the initiated and perfect.

The disciple. When any one has reached purity of heart, what is the token thereof? And when shall he know himself whether his heart has come to purity?

The teacher. When he sees all men in a good light, without any one appearing to him unclean or defiled. Such a man has really reached purity. If this were not true, how could it be possible to fulfill the word of the Apostle: When a man possesses all excellence, he reckons every one superior to himself in heart and truth [1]).

But when he has reached the point mentioned, he whose eyes are pure, does not see evil.

The disciple. What is purity and where is its limit?

The teacher. I think that purity is oblivion of those kinds of knowledge which do not belong to nature, those namely which nature has found in the world. Its limit consists therein that we are freed from that knowledge to such a degree that we reach the original simplicity and integrity of nature in the
251 way of a child, apart from small exceptions only.

The disciple. It is possible for a man to reach this order?

The teacher. Ay. One of the Fathers was come so far, that he repeatedly asked his pupil whether he had eaten bread or not. And one of the saints who was then an old ascetic, had become so pure and simple and had reached such a perfection and serenity, that he was nearly as a babe, having forgotten all wordly things. And perhaps many will not

1) Cf. Philippians 2, 3.

believe us what we say (for it is a real wonder) that even at the oblation of the Eucharist he could not observe [the fast] so as to receive the Eucharist; he did not even know whether he had observed [the fast] or not, till his disciples kept watch on him in his cell and brought him to the sanctuary, as a little boy. So very serene and pure was this blessed man. And being thus in worldly things, in his soul he was perfect with God.

The disciple. Which meditation and occupation should a man have in his reclusion and solitude, lest his intellect should be found to be occupied with accidental deliberations?

The teacher. Thou askest what shall be the meditation of him that is dead to the world in his cell. Should a man who is zealous and whose soul is awake, need to ask what his work should be in his solitude? What is the meditation of the solitary in his cell but weeping? Should he be able to turn his gaze from weeping towards a different deliberation? Which
252 meditation would be more profitable? For his dwellingplace, lonely like the grave and deprived of all worldly pleasures, teaches him that his service consists in weeping. And even his name turns him into this direction; for he is called abila, which means: bitter in heart. All the righteous have departed this world with weeping. If the saints would weep and their mouths at all times were filled with their tears and they thus departed this world, who should not weep then? The consolation of the recluse is born from weeping. If those who were victorious have shed tears in this world, how then should he that is covered with wounds dare to abstain from weeping? If before the housefather his beloved is laid dead, should he need instruction concerning the thought which should move him to tears? Thy soul which is dead in sins is laid before thee, thy soul which is of greater value to thee than the whole world. If we come to solitude, we can also get accustomed to weeping. Therefore we should steadily beseech our Lord to give us this. If we receive this gift, excellent above any other, through weeping we shall reach purity. And when we have reached it, it will not be taken from us again, to the day on which we shall depart the world.

Blessed therefore are the pure in heart who at all times enjoy this delight of tears and through it constantly see our Lord. While tears are in their eyes, they are deemed worthy
253 of seeing His revelation at the height of prayer; for they even

know of no prayer without tears. And this is what has been said by our Lord: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted[1]). For by mournfulness a man reaches purity of soul. When therefore our Saviour says: Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted, He does not explain what comfort is. When the solitary is deemed worthy on account of his mournfulness to pass beyond this place of affections and to reach the plain of purity of soul, where he will find a consolation that will not leave those who have found it — then it is clear that the consolation which at the completion of mournfulness is received through purity, is promised by our Lord to the mournful. For if any one weeps constantly, the affections will not approach his heart; for weeping lies beyond affectibility. If tears are able to efface from the mind of him that mourns and weeps for but a short time, the recollection of the affections, what shall we say about him who has imposed upon himself a definite service during day and night? Who knows the profits of weeping, save those who have given themselves to it? All the saints desire this [means of] introduction; and by weeping, a gate is opened before them through which they enter that place of consolation, in which the footsteps of God's love are impressed by revelations.

The disciple. But because man is not able to adhere to this practice, on account of the body's weak nature, it is necessary for him to have some other thing serving to captivate his mind, lest the affections should assail him through the idleness of the intellect.

The teacher. The affections are not able to assail the soul and to trouble the solitary whose heart is cut off from the world by dwelling lonely in the complete solitude of the desert, separated from all the sounds and voices of the commotion of mankind — unless he neglect his duties, especially that of being occupied with the scriptures and the profitable deliberations with which he is occupied, by the excellent understanding of which paltry thoughts are driven away from him and his mind is not able to free itself from them, but [in this state] he gazes upon the whole world, because of the great delight of that occupation by which the intellect is completely satisfied in that extreme loneliness of the desert. So he looses

1) Matthew 5:4

consciousness of himself and forgets his nature and he becomes as one who is mad without any recollection of the world; especially when he thinks of God's greatness, the glory of His nature and His wondrous works and when he recollects how high his own despicable being has been elevated. To think about Him and to dare foster such thoughts for the sake of delight and to get drunk at all times by ecstatic impulses as in the life after resurrection, are things greatly promoted by solitude, because the intellect has the opportunity of being with itself, in the peace that has its origin in solitude. At the same time it will adapt its recollections to the aim of its course, and it will direct itself towards the glory of the world to be, the hope preserved for the righteous, life in spiritual emotion
255 wholly originating in God. This is the new way of life, without recollection and without emotion concerning anything in this world. And when he is satisfied with these things his contemplation turns from them towards the things of this world in which he is still abiding, saying with amazement: O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge and unsearchable mind of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out [1]). Since He has prepared a different world which is so amazing, into which He shall introduce all rational beings and keep them without variance in life without end. What then is the reason why He has made this world first, which He has made large and has provided with a great many species, and has made a place of a multitude of affections? And He has set us first in this world and implanted in our nature a strong love of its own life; then He expels us from it, gradually, by death and prescribes to us a long interval in a state without sensual apperception, like stones and wood, a state during which He destroys our image and pours out our mettle and mixes it up with the earth. And He permits our building to be demolished and ruined, till it has lost all likeness with [its previous] composition. Then, at the time appointed by His wisdom, working according to His free will, He resurrects us in a different likeness which He knows and introduces us into that new order; and not only us, but also the holy angels, who do not need the use of this world
256 on account of their amazing nature. For all of them are nearly

1) Romans 11, 33

perfect, awaiting the resurrection and the elevation of our fallen state, when the human race shall rise from the dust, and its fallen state be quickened unto new life. For on account of us they are hindered from entering, till once the gate of that new world will be opened, which they expect. For even the class of the angels sighs with us in that it sees us loaded with the weight of the body while it hopes and expects the revelation of the children of God, so that it itself may be freed from slavery that perishes, in the freedom of the glory of the children of God [1].

First he will free this whole [world] from its state so that it is reduced to nothing, analogous to the first state of the body. Then he will elevate himself intellectually beyond the beginnings of the creation of the world, when there was no creation nor anything, no heaven, no earth, no angels, nor any of the created things. Then of a sudden he will bring all things into existence, his will being sufficient to effect that all is before him in a state of perfection. Then he will descend in his mind and visit all God's creatures. And in his high and wondrous works the wisdom of his creating power will show itself. His power subdues all minds, the amazing and powerful strength of his creating force brings into existence out of nothing a creation with innumerable different kinds.

Then he will think of how He again will destroy this, so that perishes the wondrous order, the ornament of kinds, the
257 prescribed course of the creatures, the times and occasions, the harmony of night and day, the useful seasons of the year, the embellished earth, the different kinds sprouting from it, the fine buildings of the cities and the beautiful palaces in them; the continual course of mankind, nature submitted and tormented from man's entering it until he leaves it.

And how suddenly this wonderful order will be destroyed and how a new world will begin in which no recollection whatever of the first creation will occur to any man's mind, in which there will be a different mode of life, different deliberations and different thoughts. Then human nature will no longer recollect this world nor the former way of life in it. For the gaze of their mind will be captivated by the sight of that [new] order, and it will not be able to turn in its memory

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 21. On the following passage cf. the Introduction.

towards the races of flesh and blood; for as soon as this world is destroyed, the new one will begin [1]).

O mother that suddenly has been forgotten by the sons which she has borne and educated and instructed — and in the twinkling of an eye they are gathered unto another bosom, and have become real sons of the barren one that which has never borne. Rejoice, o barren, thou that didst not bear, at the sons which the earth has borne to thee. And the mind thinks in amazement, of how a new world will take the place of this, and of when its beginning will be; and of how long these bodies will lie in that state, body and dust mingled together; and what like that mode of life will be; and in what likeness this nature will rise and in what way it will come to the second creation.

By such thoughts rest will spread over the mind. And the
258 apperception of its bodily state will vanish; and it will remain a long time in silence, wondering at the incomprehensible deeds of God. At that moment the solitary will kneel down and render thanks with many tears to God who is wise in His works, and whose deeds are incomprehensible, as are also the secrets of His exalted mind, concerning what He has done and what He will do. What heart of stone would not become unconscious under such impulses, struck with silence and stupor, and turned away from the emotions of senses and impulses? Blessed is he who has been deemed worthy of these things. Blessed is he who has thought of this, day and night. Blessed is he who has been occupied with these things during his whole life. To every man this thought is useful, but especially to him that lives in solitude. And it is becoming that these recollections should always be with him. These indications a man should take to mind and, having finished prayer, he should think of them and meditate upon them.

When he is occupied with these thoughts, there will be no room for foreign recollections in his spirit, which could hinder him from the constant recollection of God. And if at first he does not perceive the profitable influence of these things, on account of his being distracted, he should not be dejected. When the husbandman casts seed on the earth, it is not pos-

1) The two sentences which follow could be an interpolation; the sentence "And the mind thinks" etc. is the direct continuation of the present one.

sible that he should see the oars at the same time. Dejection and despondency are connected with sowing. It is sweet to the peasant to eat of his bread; but his sweat is still sweater.

259 This thought, in solitude, will pour endless delight into the heart and will quickly draw the mind towards unspeakable ecstasy. Blessed is he to whom this fountain has been opened and who drinks from it at all hours of the day and the night.

The disciple. What is the acme of all the labours of asceticism, which a man, when he has reached it, recognises as the summit of his course?

The teacher. When he is deemed worthy of constant prayer. When he has reached this, he has touched the end of all virtues and forthwith he has a spiritual dwelling-place. If a man has not received in truth the gift of the Comforter, it is not possible for him to accomplish constant prayer in quiet. When the spirit takes its dwelling-place in a man he does not cease to pray, because the spirit will constantly pray in him [1]). Then, neither when he sleeps, nor when he is awake, will prayer be cut off from his soul; but when he eats and when he drinks, when he lies down or when he does any work, even when he is immersed in sleep, the perfumes of prayer will breathe in his soul spontaneously. And henceforth he will not possess prayer at limited times, but always; and when he has outward rest, even then prayer is ministered unto him secretly. For the silence of the serene is prayer, says a man clad with Christ. For their deliberations are divine impulses. The motions of the pure mind are quiet voices with which they secretly chant psalms to the Invisible One.

260 The disciple. What is spiritual prayer, and how are we made worthy of it?

The teacher. It is the psychic impulses which partake of the influence of the Holy Spirit, on account of veracious purity. One man in ten thousand is found worthy of this. It is a symbol of the future way of existence, for nature is elevated and exempt from all the impulses from the recollection of things in this world. It does not pray, but the soul perceives the spiritual things of the world beyond (which is something greater than the mind of man); the understanding of these is kindled by spiritual force. — It is inner sight, and

1) This is apparently the meaning of the sentence, which in the original is not quite clear.

not the impulse and the beseeching of prayer. It has its starting point in prayer. Because such men have reached the summit of purity and because at all times their inner emotions are stirring in prayer — as I have said before — the Spirit, whenever it looks at them, will find them in prayer; and from there it will conduct them by contemplation, which is interpreted spiritual sight. They do not want prolonged prayer nor the defined order of frequent service.

For the recollection of God alone will be sufficient for them, and at once they will be governed by love, as if captives. But because of this state they are not absolutely negligent, but attribute honour to prayer by standing on their feet at fixed times; but they do not practise continual prayer.

For we see that the holy Antonius, when standing on his feet
261 in the prayer of the ninth hour, perceived that his mind was taken up. And another saint found himself in ecstasy for four days, while he stood in prayer with outspread hands. And, on examination, it will be seen in the stories of many others that they were found in the well known attitude of prayer, when granted this gift. A man is deemed worthy of this, when he puts off outward and inward sin, by observing the commandments of our Lord, which are anterior to this state. If one will practise these in his own degree, it is inevitably necessary for him to forsake all human things. This means: he shall put off the body and be outside it, so to speak; not its nature, but the use of it. There is nobody who has practised these things in the sense of the lawgiver, and with whom sin has persevered to dwell.

Therefore our Lord has promised in the Gospel, that He shall make His dwellingplace the man who observes these things.

The disciple. And what is the perfection of all spiritual fruits?

The teacher. This is when man is deemed worthy of the complete love of God.

The disciple. And how can he that has reached this point, acquire certainty?

The teacher. Every time when the thought of God is stirred in his spirit, the heart will become hot with love at once, the eyes will shed multitudinous tears; for love is accustomed to shed tears at the recollection of the beloved. He

that is in this state will never be found destitute of tears, be-
262 cause he is never without abundant recollection of God, so that even during sleep he speaks with Him. Love is accustomed to practise these things and this is the accomplishment of man in this life.

The disciple. He that after many labours and fatigues and victories fought and won, is assailed by the thought of haughtiness that is based upon the beauty of his excellence, when he recalls the many labours he has borne — how can he restrain his thoughts and regain watchfulness so as not to give way?

The teacher. When he knows that he falls from God as a withered leaf falls from the tree, then he will also know his own strength and recognise whether he has acquired these virtues by his strength and whether he could have withstood all the struggles face-to-face if God had withdrawn from him His help and had left him alone in his strife with Satan without being accompanied by that force that usually accompanies the victorious combatants in their struggles. For here their strength, or better their weakness, comes to light. So that it is God's care for man which at all times guards and strengthens him and through which he overcomes all classes of men, be it in the struggle of chastity, or in the sufferings of martyrdom or in the other hardships while he suffers for the sake of divine things.

This is well known and no doubt concerning it is possible. For how else could nature vanquish this mighty force of never resting allurements which have their seat in man's members
263 and torment him and yet he does withstand them? How is it that others which love and long after the same purity, are not able to reach it, though they strive after it, nay daily they are cast back, tormented and sad and weeping over themselves, whereas thou bearest easily the difficulties of nature, which are so hard, and yet thou art not oppressed by them? Or how were it possible that another should endure in his sensitive flesh the cutting iron and the combs in all his members without being vanquished by suffering under all kinds of tortures, whereas else he could not endure a little thorn inserted under his nail? But these totally diverse tortures he bears without suffering in the natural way. How should this be possible unless some force, apart from that of nature, were sent to him and

from another direction and unless this force restrained and mitigated the force of the tortures?

There is nothing that withholds us from mentioning here a story that is really amazing to one who hears it. Because we have pointed to God's care for man which makes him victorious in all battles for the sake of excellence, it would not be becoming to omit this story. Socrates, in his work on the history of the church, when mentioning the Roman emperors, relates in a succinct way the evil which the members of the church had to suffer under Julianus; then passing on to par-
264 ticulars he tells a story of that which happened in the city of Antioch.

A certain adolescent, Theodore by name, was brought by the heathens before Sallustius, to whom the jurisdiction in these matters had been entrusted. He gave him up to suffering and torture, commanding that his whole body should be combed. Then he set him free from torture, thinking that he was dead. But God was the saviour of that blessed man, who lived for a long time after his testimony. For Rufinus, who has written about ecclesiastical things in Greek, says that a long time after he had conversation with this blessed Theodore. He asked him whether he had felt the pain keenly when being tortured. The latter answered that he had been conscious of pain to a very trifling extent only. For a young man had been standing near him, wiping off the sweat of the struggle and strengthening his soul and making the time of the struggle of the tortures a delight to him. O, for God's compassion, how near is His bounty to those who begin the warfare for His sake in order to bear sufferings for Him gladly. Do not injure God's bounty to thee, o man.

If it is manifest, that thou art not the victor but that thou art as an instrument and that the Lord wins the victory for thee whereas thou obtainest the name of victor as a present, what then hinders thee from beseeching at all times the same power, that thou mayest always obtain the same victory as a
265 witness? Hast thou not heard, o man, from of old and from the beginnings of time, how many champions have fallen from the height of their victories because they have injured grace?

On the same subject. The gifts of God unto the human race being many and various, there is also a difference in their smallness or greatness in relation to those who receive them.

Though all of them are wonderful and glorious, one is more than the other in glory and honour. One degree is higher than the previous one, according to the word of scripture.

And further, that a man be elected to practise good works and a steady behaviour, this is one of the principal gifts of Christ. But many forget this grace, namely those whom God has distinguished above others so that they belong to the receivers of His gifts, even to the degree that they are elected to the service of the Lord; then, in contrast to the gratitude which was always on their lips, they turn aside to presumption and become haughty in mind. And though they have been made worthy to serve God with pure behaviour and spiritual labours, yet they do not deem themselves receivers of grace but as those who deserve this through God, forgetting that they have been elected from the rest of mankind unto familiarity with Him and knowledge of His mysteries. Nor do they tremble in their whole soul when they think of how their comrades, who fostered the same thoughts, were suddenly de-
266 prived of that strength with which they had been entrusted, and of how in the twinkling of an eye they lost the great honour they had possessed and declined quickly unto lasciviousness and turned towards the base behaviour of the irrational animals. And because they know not the strength of their soul, nor perpetually recollect Him that made them worthy of the great boon of serving Him and of abiding in the honour of His kingdom and that made them comrades of the spiritual beings and brought them near unto the behaviour of the angels, He rejects them from their service. Thus He shows to them by the sudden variations of their behaviour, that it was not by their own [strength] that they adhered to a steady behaviour under all the assaults of nature and the demons and the other impediments, but that this strength was a gift from Him.

What other men cannot even endure to listen to, on account of its difficulty, this they have endured a long time without being vanquished, because the strength that accompanied them was able to help them under all circumstances and to guard them at all times. Accordingly, since they have forgotten this, the word has been fulfilled in them. Namely as they have not willed concerning themselves that they should know God, viz. their Lord who has made the service of the spiritual beings descend to earth, God has delivered them up to vain know-

ledge and so they have received in person the retribution which their forgetfulness had deserved.

The disciple. Is it possible that a man should so to speak daringly leave the dwellingplaces of men suddenly and
267 go naked into the uninhabited desert and the terrible wilderness in beautiful zeal and that he should die there from hunger or from the absence of shelter or the like?

The teacher. He that has prepared a dwellingplace for the beasts before He created them and who provides their wants, will not neglect those who fear them, especially when they follow Him simply, without forethought. He whose will accords with God in all things will never, for fear of bodily evils and dangers, consent to adhere to a filthy behaviour and to endure a life of humiliation because he fears troubles. But he will count it an exquisite and delicious thing to become estranged to the whole world in purity of behaviour, and to lead a life of deprivation among hills and mountains and to wander in the haunts of beasts and not to lead a life of filth, in bodily comfort, delivering up his soul so that it be for ever destitute of a pious and pure behaviour unto God, to whom belongeth the glory and the honour and who preserves us in His goodness and sanctifies us by His spirit to the honour of His name, that we may praise Him worthily all the days of our life, Amen.

For one of the saints says[1]: The body becomes a comrade of sin; for it is afraid of troubles, thinking it may receive an injury and have to give up its life. For the spirit of God oppresses the body so that it dies; it is well known that it cannot vanquish sin unless it die. Who desires that our Lord should dwell in him, will oppress his body and minister unto his Lord those spiritual fruits which the apostle describes; and he will guard his soul against the works of the flesh which
268 Paul describes. For the body that is mingled with sin takes pleasure in the works of the flesh. And the spirit of God takes pleasure in its own fruits. When the body is weak by fasting and mortification, the soul is spiritually strong through prayer. When the body is vehemently oppressed by solitude and penury and its life is near its term, it will beseech thee: Leave me a while to behave with moderation. Now I give directions because

1) Introduction p. 32

I know by experience that evils are of this nature. And when thou releasest the body somewhat from oppression, giving it some comfort by sparing it so that it can take breath again, then it will whisper to thee quietly again and again: Let us leave even the wilderness. For its allurements are very strong; [it says]: from now onward we shall be able to behave well, even in the neighbourhood of the inhabited world. For we have been put to the test in many things and we shall be able to continue this [behaviour] even there. Put me to the test and if I do not comply with thy will, we can begin anew for the desert lies before us. — But do not believe [the body] even if it beseeches and promises greatly, for it will not keep its promises. When thou hast granted it some of its wishes, it will drive thee on towards greater concessions from which thou canst not retract thy steps. When thou art dejected on account of thy being filled with troubles, say to thyself: Doest thou desire this filth and this sordid life? And if the body says to thee: It is a great sin that thou killest thyself, — say to it: I kill myself because I cannot live purely. I will die now and not further see my soul's essential die away from God. It is
269 better for me to die now for the sake of purity than to live a shameful life in the world[1]). This death I willingly choose on account of my sins. I kill myself because I have sinned before God and will not further rouse His anger. What to me is life afar from God? I will bear these evils and through them I will not be a stranger to heavenly hope. Why have I been created in the world, if I simply enter and leave it? And what should God profit by my life in the world, if I lived badly in it? On the contrary, I would but rouse His anger.

XXXVI

ON THE VARIOUS WAYS IN WHICH SATAN WARS AGAINST THOSE WHO TREAD THE NARROW WAY WHICH IS ABOVE THE WORLD

Our enemy Satan has also other methods, when he cunningly proposes to attack those who engage themselves in this strife. His way of warfare varies according to their character and in relation to their personal tendencies.

1) See p. 31, 97

As to those whom he sees to be of a weak will and of feeble thought he combates them vehemently from the beginning by submitting them to heavy and terrible temptations, in order to make them taste the nature of his evil from the very beginning of the way. In this way he intends to instill into them a horror of the first battle so that this way shall appear to them difficult to walk. And if the beginning is very
270 difficult, who could endure to the end, facing all the battles which are ranged in the middle? Thus they will not again venture to withstand him or to look for other help, on account of their being totally occupied with the thought of his attacks. And when he has pressed them a little vehemently they take to flight. Or better: God lets him oppress them, without helping them in any way because they have engaged in the battle of the Lord, with a cold heart and hesitatingly. Cursed is every one who performs the work of the Lord without diligence, retaining his hand from bloodshed. But also: His help is near those who fear Him [1]; and He commands that we should not meet the foe with a cold and fearful heart. Begin to destroy him and to wage war with him and I will begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven [2].

If thou doest not voluntarily die to the senses for the sake of the love of God, thou wilt die intellectually away from God, against thy will. That which belongs to thy lot thou shalt not refuse to take upon thee willingly, though it is connected with temporary suffering; afterwards thou shalt enter the glory of God. If thou perishest bodily in the strife of the Lord, the Lord will even crown thee; and to thy thriumphant limbs He will attribute the honour of the martyrs.

So, as I have said above, if they have not girded themselves up from the beginning and strengthened themselves and vowed themselves to death, then they will appear to be inferior in all battles, especially because God overlooks their relaxation [3] in that they trie to accomplish the work of the Lord in
271 a frivolous and tentative way. And even Satan knows them from the beginning, examining what their thoughts are: pusillanimous, loving themselves, even sparing their body. So he persecutes them like a hurrycane, because he does not find in

1) Ps. 145, 19 2) Deut. 2, 25 3) عاهدة as the London Mss. have

them the intelligible power which he usually finds in the triumphant. As a man's will tends towards God, for whose sake he loves labours, so God will send him His help and show him His care. For it is not possible for Satan to approach unto anyone or to bring forward his temptations, except by permission of the godhead; or else that his will has become relaxed and he has given himself to impure thoughts and to distraction; or because doubt has taken hold of him. Concerning such persons Satan does not ask [permission] to try them as in the case of those who are perfect and great; as to the latter he knows that they are not given over into his hand. For he knows that it is not possible that the power of God's care be withdrawn from them. Except because of one of the causes mentioned.

This is one way in which the foe makes war. As to those whose will he sees to be vigorous and who reckon death as nothing and who have begun with keen zeal giving themselves over to every temptation and to death, and who trample upon life and the world and the body with its temptations — thees
272 he does not meet at the outset, nor does he usually show himself to them. But he withdraws himself and gives way to them. He neither encounters them with his principal force nor does he enter into battle with them. For he knows that the beginning of battles is usually hot and the antagonist is zealous and zealous champions are seldom vanquished.

This method he follows, not because he is afraid of them, but of that divine power which sets them ablaze through the forces working in them till they begin to emit it through their own will in full confidence. But he leaves them for some time till their zeal is abating and their attention is withdrawn from the exercise of the weapon for which they had trained themselves and with which they had armed their mind, viz. different divine words and profitable and strengthening recollections; and thus awaits the time of negligence. And when the first thoughts have abated somewhat, how often will they find within themselves occasions of defeat on account of allurements that have their origin in the mind. They dig a ditch in themselves through the distraction of thoughts that arise in their mind through tediousness, through which a chill overpowers them.

It is not spontaneous when Satan acts thus, delaying the time of battle; for neither when he spares them nor when he

withdraws himself from them, does he account them nothing. But I think that a certain power surrounds those who are blazing with fervour unto God and who have begun in a youthful way, without forethought, confiding in Him on account
273 of their faith, without knowing however against whom they have to fight. Therefore he conceals his evil nature from them, approaching not near. For his nature is checked by the guardian which he sees with them continually. Now if they do not cast away the causes of profit: beseeching, labours and humbleness, the helper will never withdraw Himself from them. The love of comfort is a cause of [God's] withdrawal. But if they adhere to these [works] sedulously, they will never be destitute of help and the foe will not be allowed to approach them. And if [God] withdraws himself from time to time, this is for the sake of training. For while the holy force governs and accompanies them, they do not fear seducers; the mind is full of courage and therefore it despises them. But He trains them as a man who teaches swimming to a little boy; as soon as he begins to sink, the teacher lifts him up, for the boy swims upon the hands of his teacher. And when the courage of the boy begins to diminish, from fear that he will be drowned, the man who supports him with his hands, cries: be not afraid, I support thee. Or, as a mother who teaches her little child to walk, places him at a distance from her and calls him; but when the boy will go to his mother on those little tottering feet of his, they tremble on account of their weakness. Then when the boy is about to fall, the mother will run and take him
274 in her arms. So God's grace will bear up and train the children of man, namely those who trust themselves clearly and simply to the hands of Him that created them and who with their whole heart turn from the world and follow Him.

And thou, O man, who hast begun to follow God, recollect perpetually during thy whole struggle the beginning and that first zeal at the outset of the way and the fervent thoughts with which thou didst leave thy former life and range thyself in the order of battle. And examine thyself every day [in order to state] whether the fervour of thy soul has abated in comparison with the zeal with which thou wert blazing. Or whether thou lackest any weapon with which thou wert girded at the beginning of thy struggle. And elevate constantly thy voice in the camp and encourage those of the right hand with familiar

thoughts. And show the opposite party that thou art awake. And if thou meetest impetuosity in the beginning, because the temptator will frighten thee, do not then relax. Perhaps this will be profitable to thee.

It is not without reason that thy saviour permits anything unto thee but only when He has foreseen it and ordered it to thy profit. Show thou no relaxation from the beginning; for if thou shouldst show relaxation here, thou wouldst not be able to withstand what follows: hunger, sickness, fearful sights and so on. Do not turn into its opposite the intention of Him that commands thee to fight, which serves to thy profit, lest
275 thy foe find thee as he hopes to find thee. But cry unto God unceasingly and weep before His grace and weary thyself out with beseeching, till He sends thee a helper. And if thou once seest the saviour who is with thee, thou wilt no more be vanquished by thy foe who is standing before thee.

Thus far these two kinds of strife.

Another way in which Satan makes war against those who are girded.

When after all this Satan is still opposed by a man without being able to overpower him in battle, or rather his helper, for whose sake man resists him, and who helps and strengthens him to such an extent that he who is compact flesh and body vanquishes him that is spiritual and unbodily — when Satan sees all the help which that man receives from God so that his outward senses are not vanquished by sights and sounds nor his thoughts weakened by excitations and allurements, nay he even despises the blows they give him, then he seeks for a means to separate that man from the angel that helps him, or rather he purposes to blind the mind of him that is helped so that he is left without support.

So he stirs that man's thoughts of presumption namely those of [imaginary] strength, so that he thinks his mind the cause of all this vigour and of the glorious wealth which he possesses in his soul. His preservation from all these obstacles, sad, un-
276 speakable, and bloodthirsty, he sometimes ascribes to accident, sometimes to their being weak. I do not mention other things the bare recollection of which makes the soul shiver on account of their blasphemous nature.

It also happens that he advances his betrayal insidiously under the appearance of divine revelations. During sleep he

imparts information and in the state of waking he assumes the likeness of an angel of light. And all this [is of such a nature] that, should a man surrender to it even to a small extent, he will become its victim. But if a man be wise and keep his thoughts under control, or rather if God helps him and he fixes the gaze of his heart on heaven in order to turn away from incantators, then the foe plans another kind of war. This is the only one left to him now; and because it has some affinity to nature he expects the more that man will be entangled in it. What is it? He contrives in all manner of ways to set man in contact with those things through which he usually becomes guilty on account of his nature. The mind of the warrior namely becomes blinded by sight of and contact with [worldly] things, and it is easily vanquished in battle when it is near them, especially when they are ranged before his eyes. The clever one knows this cunning thoroughly on account of his experience with many valiant champions who were van-
277 quished through it. Therefore he prepares this means cunningly. And when it is not of a nature to be practised because of the [warrior's] utter solitude and his dwelling far from things that cause [sin], then he contrives to bring it near him through phantasy. So he shows him fallacious images in the habit of reality, in order that by these visions he be rendered desirous and incited to conceive impure thoughts and become guilty and to alienate Him that helps him. For Satan knows that the solitary's victory and defeat, his treasure and his help and all that belongs to him, depends upon deliberation, and that, if deliberation be moved from its place, one short moment is able to throw him down from the nest of life on to the earth, if his will be pointed in this direction for even a moment only. Thus it has happened to many of the saints that he showed them the image of a beautiful woman.

Those who dwelt at a distance of one or two or even ten parasangs from the inhabited world he did indeed contrive to bring in contact with a woman. But to those, to whom he could not do this on account of their distant dwellingplace being too far off, he showed the images of womanly beauty by appearing to them, now in splendid dress and finery and in a seducing aspect, now even in the form of a naked woman. Some of the solitaries he overpowered by these means and the like, some by real seduction, some by things of the ima-

gination which brought about their fall [1]) through the relaxation of their deliberations; so they fell down into the abyss of despondency and turned unto the world, cutting themselves off from heavenly hope.

Others however who were steadfast and illuminated by grace,
278 have vanquished him and his fantastic representations and trampled upon bodily pleasures; and they have been found to be elected by the love of God.

Often also he represents to them images of gold and precious things as treasures that were hidden somewhere. It even happens that he shows them these things in reality, expecting that by one of these various [artifices] it will be possible to impede some one of the solitaries so as to bar his course through his being entangled in one of the snares of his nets. Lead me not, o Lord, into these temptations; for even the strong and the elect scarcely pass this gate victorious.

The seducer is allowed to make war upon the saints in all these ways of temptation, in order that the love of God which is in them may be proved under these circumstances; namely, whether they are friends of God and whether they adhere to His love because [worldly] things are at a distance, far off and absent; or whether they love God really, so as to make war on and to despise these things even when present, without being vanquished and without giving up their love of God through the allurements of those temptations. This does not happen that they may be known to God through these [temptations], but to the Devil, who is very desirous of recognizing them, if possible. As he also said concerning Job, asking God about him: Doth Job fear God for nought [2])? If then a little negligence creeps in, the temptator approaches with authority in accordance with the power he has over them. Then the unjust appears in the desire which these things excite in him.
279 And through these things those are proved who are strong in their love of Him, those who despise all these things, which in their eyes are counted as nothing in comparison with the love of God. In this they are humble, ascribing merits only to Him who strengthens all and who is the cause of their victory and into His hands they entrust the battle. For Thou art the

1) lit. derision
2) Job 1, 9

powerful, and the battle is Thine. Fight, o Lord, and be victorious on our behalf.

Then they are tested by these things as gold in the furnace. But those who are untrustworthy are recognized there through those trials, and thrown out as refuse. They give way to their foe and have to leave the battle, defeated through the relaxation of their mind, or perhaps through their haughtiness which has made them unworthy of that strong power which is always ready to help the saints.

For never to be defeated is the power of Him that helps us, the omnipotent, the almighty, the victorious at all times whenever He descends into the body of mortals to fight for them. But it is manifest that those who are defeated, are defeated without Him. They are those whose will is stripped of Him because of their injustrice, who are not worthy of that power which is the support of the victorious. They also perceive at the time of battle that they lack the usual strength, which they found in themselves in all hot and difficult battles. How do they perceive this? They see in themselves that their defeat gives them comfort and that the hardships of strife are
280 difficult for them to bear, hardships under which at all times they were wonted to win a clear victory. And the emotions of zeal which at such times used to stir nature vigorously and which were strengthened by a fiery heat — they do not find them in themselves.

Now those who are shaken from their foundation are terrified not only by these and the like struggles, but even by the sound of the leaves of the trees [1]), and give way and renounce and turn their back under light trouble, for hunger or slight illness. The true and elect, however, do not even satisfy their hunger with herbs and vegetables. But, feeding upon drugs and dry stubble, even then they are not to be persuaded to open their mouth for food, before the fixed time. Lying on the earth, with an emaciated body and eyes blinded [2]) on account of bodily weakness, their soul near their mouth [3]) through tribulation, even then they do not give way so as to be vanquished and give up their firm will. For it is more delightful for them to be troubled for the sake of love, with

1) Cf. Lev. 26, 36

2) Isaac himself is said to have become blinded

3) i. e. on the point of leaving the body

labours for excellency, than to possess temporal life and all its comforts. So, when adversities approach them, they rejoice; for they know that these will lead them to perfection. And not only have they no doubt of the love of Christ in spite of the bodily tortures they have to suffer, but it would be delightful
281 even to bear for His sake loss of life; even then they would not separate themselves from Him.

XXXVII

ON THE THINGS THE EXACT USE OF WHICH I HAVE LEARNT BY THE KNOWLEDGE OF DISCERNMENT

Having been tested many times by things of the right and by things of the left, and examined myself in these two states many times, and received innumerable blows from the opposition, and been deemed worthy of important, hidden support, and having continued the examination of myself during a range of years, I have learnt by experience that the principles of all good things and the regaining of the soul from the captivity of the enemies, and the way towards life and light, consist in two things: abiding in one and the same place, and constant fasting. This means: that a man, being wise, shall lay down a fair law for his belly, by untroubled, constant sitting [alone]. Proceeding from here he will reach the subduing of the senses; further: watchfulness of mind; further: tranquillizing of brutish passions stirring in the body. Further: quiet thoughts. Further: enlightened impulses of the spirit. Further: application to excellent works. Further: high and subtle insights. Further: immeasurable tears at all times. Further: watchful chastity, without any connection with the experience of the image in the spirit.
282 Further: a quick and far gaze. Further: a deep intelligence, penetrating and attaining to the hidden things in all depths, the power of words and the hidden motions in the soul; and the distinctions of spirits and holy powers; of true sight and deceitful images. Further: fear of the [many] ways and tracks in the sea of the spirit — fear that cuts off negligence; and blazing zeal which tramples upon all dangers and sets its foot upon all things feared; and fervour despising all desires and effacing from the mind the recollection of all transitory things:

and many other things. In brief: the liberation of true man and the renewal of the soul and the resurrection with Christ in the kingdom, away from here.

He that neglects these two[1]), should know that he not only bereaves himself of these, but that he shakes the foundation of all virtues by despising these two. And as the beginning of all other virtues in the soul is formed by these principles of all divine service, which are the gate and the way unto Christ, for him that takes hold of them and sticks to them, so the deviation and the departure from them towards those which are their opposite, I mean distraction of the body and a lawless belly, constitute in the soul a place for the beginning of all things contrary to those mentioned above. And also this attitude takes its source in one action, viz. in the fact that the submissive senses are first freed from the bonds of lonely dwelling. And what are the consequences? Unexpected, impure
283 contact; threatening danger of falling; agitation and heavy billows stirred by sensible sight; almighty flames kindled in the body; small spiritual shortcomings; uncontrollable deliberations, prone to falling; lack of love of service; gradual forgetting of the distinctions of solitude; complete negligence of the canons of behaviour; renewal of former things which had become effaced, and instruction concerning other new things, unknown before and caused by audition on various and perpetually recurring occasions and by a multitude of unintentional cases of sight, presenting themselves on account of perpetual travelling from country to country and from place to place. All this has the effect that those affections which by God's grace were already slumbering in the soul on account of the oblivion into which obliterated recollections had passed, begin to be stirred into motion anew, forcing the soul to work. And there are yet other [injuries] which I will not mention all of them; taking their origin in that first one, they are let loose against the miserable one, and he has to bear them.

And what is the second fault? This, that he begins to resemble the swines in his deeds. What is it that the swines do? They do not check their belly, filling it at all times without having an hour fixed for food, as rational beings have.

And what further? From this comes heavy sleep, great

1) solitude and fasting

284 bodily heaviness and a slackening of the shoulders; the compulsion to desist from services, aversion to the inclinations [1]) connected with them; contempt of the usual prostrations, darkness and coldness of spirit; a dull mind that does not distinguish, confusedness and great darkness of deliberations; thick clouds and obscurity spread over the whole soul; great dejection concerning every godly work, also concerning recitation [of the scriptures], originating therein that the sweetness of the sense of the words is not tasted; frequent neglect of necessary things; an uncontrolled mind, made blunt by wandering through the whole world, many humours gathered in the limbs; impure phantasies during the whole night, consisting in sordid representations and unclean voluptuous images, which cling to the soul and act in it according to their impure pleasure; and a cover and a body wholly defiled by the large stream of shameful things flowing from [the body] as from a fountain. And this does not happen at night only, but also by day the body sends forth [this stream constantly], defiling the mind thereby.

And on account of these things, [the solitary] disavows his chastity. Sweet allurements working in the whole body with unbearable and incessant heat; exciting deliberations full of beautiful faces representing them before him lasciviously and perpetually and thereby seducing him; a mind delivering itself unhesitatingly to intercourse with them, joining itself with them in longing and meditation, because its distinctive faculty has
285 been blinded; all this is what has been said by one of the great philosophers: he that provides his body with many things, exposes his soul to penury. And though he recollects his soul now and then, trying to compel himself, yet it is impossible for him to keep his soul under control because of the hot emotions in the body which by the power of their allurements, forcibly captivate the soul, according to their pleasure. As the clever and acute Mar Diodorus of Tarsus says: to support the body in softness and luxury, quickly imparts to the soul a sensation of suffering, so that death becomes to it something deplorable and God's judgment is thought of with fear. The soul, however, that constantly thinks of becoming things, is quiet in its being; it has small solicitude, as it feels no grief.

Care for excellence is the driver of the affections, the guardian

1) ܟܦܦܐ

of excellence, a secure education, joy without solicitude, a good life and a safe port. Bodily luxury strengthens the affections and makes them dominant upon the soul, nay they even totally eradicate it. And apart from all this, it inflames the belly on account of wantonness and lack of rules as to hours. Yet [the solitary] does not wish that gradually the passion of hunger should gain power over his soul which in a compulsory way could be brought by it under the dominion of the affections.

These are the fruits that come forth from the shameful [passions] of the belly; and these are the fruits produced by
286 the lack of power to cling to one spot in peace. As now our foe, who follows us constantly, knows that on these two occasions nature is usually capable of being troubled and affected with passion to a higher degree and also the mind easier to be perflexed through sensible vision and the comfort of the belly, therefore he contrives to surpass nature, and at these times casts into the mind different haughty deliberations in order to strengthen the power of passion over nature, if possible, by a more intense flame, and so ruin a man utterly.

Just as our foe knows these times, it is, therefore, necessary for us to know them also as well as our own weakness and the [want of] strength of our nature which is not able to withstand the vehement emotions of those times nor the deliberations subtle as the dust of the earth which are before our eyes so that we cannot see ourselves nor remain upright before fate.

By such experiences on many occasions we have miserably learnt from our foe to be prudent henceforth and not to allow ourselves to relax so that we indulge in the desire of consolation or to be defeated by hunger however we may be incited by it; or to be removed from the place of our solitude unto a place safe against such accidents, thinking out reasons and devising means for turning our back to the desert. Such thoughts are manifest machinations of Satan. But if thou remainest in the desert, thou wilt not be tested. For thou seest no woman
287 in the desert nor anything that does harm to thy behaviour, nor [doest thou hear] evil sounds. What hast thou to do with the ways of Egypt and with drinking water from the Nile? Understand what I say. Show thy foe thy training by enduring small things; then he will not demand great things from thee. Constantly thou shalt have to keep the laws of these small things, thereby throwing before his feet a bait, namely, in the

struggle concerning them. So he will not have rest from them, so as to have occasion to set up dangerous snares for thee in secret.

How is it possible that he should persuade a man, who is not to be persuaded to go five steps outside the door of his hut, to leave the desert or to approach unto the town? And he that can not be induced to look through his window from the place of his reclusion, how should he persuade him to leave it? He who is not to be persuaded to take food in the late evening being desirous of vigils, how is it possible that his deliberations should be excited so as to begin [his meals] before the appointed time? And how is it possible that he should induce as to important matters him who was even ashamed to satisfy [his hunger] by contemptible food? And how can he allure towards foreign beauty him, that even refused to look at his own body? First man is vanquished by small things when he despises them and then he causes himself to be driven towards serious ones. But how can he deter from troubles that lead to death him who loves [death], and does not care in the least to continue temporary life? Thus is the war carried on with understanding: the wise do not allow
288 their foe to invite them to great struggles. But the endurance which they show in small things, preserves them from falling while they perform large works. First the [solitary] desists from constant prayer consisting in beseechings of the spirit, and then he persuades him to despise canonical prayer [performed] by the body at fixed times.

Firstly deliberation is relaxed, so that, within a short time, it gives way in insignificant and small things. And when it has given up its endurance, it will trespass in a wanton way.

Firstly the solitary will be vanquished, or rather: it will be a trifling thing in his eyes to look at his naked body or to contemplate the beauty of each of his limbs, without clothes; or he will loose control over his senses in a vile way when he goes to fulfill a bodily want; or he will daringly and unblushingly introduce his hand within his clothes and touch his body; and then one thing and another will happen to him. As soon as the watchfulness of his spirit relaxes, showing negligence in any of these things, the gate towards serious offences will be open for him.

Our deliberations are as water, as is well known. As long

as they are confined on all sides, they proceed in their [right] order. If they once find a small outlet, however, they escape through it, causing breaches and ruins. For the subtle one who is spying us and waiting, sitting night and day before our
289 nostrils and looking which gate will be opened for him in any of our senses or in which of the things enumerated there will appear any foulness — he will of a sudden direct against us his weapons. Sometimes it will be our own nature which loves consolation and evil intercourse, and frivolity and pleasure and relaxation, which is a fountain of affections and a sea of agitation. Sometimes it will be our foe. Let us therefore vary great labours and circumstances perilous with ruin, with slight labours, that we may show in these small ones which are nothing, that they may give rise to important struggles if they are neglected, and to labours whose accomplishment is difficult, and to intricate battles and to large ulcers. Who would not like to have a quiet sleep at a small expense?

O wisdom, how admirable art thou! And how thou doest foresee all things from afar! Blessed is every one who has found thee, who has been liberated from the torpidity of youth that buys great detriment with a slight negligence. One of the sages says beautifully, that once he was suddenly struck by emotion so that thereupon he straightway sat down, for a mere fortuitous thing, which was not of a nature to cause fear. For this, some one in a light mood laughed at him. He answered and said: Not of this am I afraid. I am afraid of the expe-
290 rienced fact that often negligence as to small things causes danger of great ones. So, by my emotion and my sitting straightway down, I have proved concerning myself that I am awake; and also that further on I will not neglect those things which are not to be feared.

For philosophy is this that a man gather great consolation for his soul by the attention he bestows on trifling things; that he will not slumber ere fate come and reach him; but that he will take in hand the previous things and will buy that which is of importance, in exchange for a thing which will cause injury, a little before [this happens]. Fools attach a greater value to a little consolation which is near, than to a kingdom which is far. It is better to bear tortures in probity, than to relax on a comfortable royal bed in shameful baseness. For the sages prefer death to disdain on account of neglect in

affairs. Wake for thy life, says a philosopher; for drowsiness of mind is cognate to real death. The divine philosopher Basilius says: he that is weak in small things, do not believe that he will be trustworthy in great ones. Do not shrink from dying for the sake of those things for which thou wilt live.

XXXVIII

SHORT SENTENCES CONCERNING THE DISTINCTION OF THE MIND'S IMPULSES

Pusillanimity is a sign of despondency; the mother of both is negligence.

A timorous man shows that he suffers from two illnesses: from love of the body and from want of faith. Love of the body is a sign of unbelief. But he that despises it, shows concerning himself that he trusts God and expects the future things.

If there is anyone who has approached God without being troubled, try then on thy part to resemble him.

Courage of the heart and contempt for danger arise from one of two causes: either from hardness of heart, or from a deep belief in God. The former is accompanied by haughtiness, the latter by humbleness of heart.

It is impossible for a man to acquire confidence in God, if he has not before fulfilled His will in part. Confidence in God and manliness of heart rise from the testimony of conscience. For on account of the true testimony of our mind we acquire confidence in God. The testimony of the mind has its origin therein that a man is not despised by his soul for neglect of his duty, as far as this is possible.

If our heart does not despise us, then we are frank with God. Frankness has its origin in a firm behaviour and in an unstained mind.

It is hard to serve as a slave to the body. He that is aware of his hope, though to a small extent, will refuse to
292 serve again the stern will of this hard master.

Endurance in perfect silence and preservation of solitude arise from one of three causes: from the [love of] glory among fellow-men; or the fervent zeal for excellence; or a certain

inward working of God towards which the mind is attracted. He that is destitute of the two latter causes, will suffer from the first as it were by necessity.

Excellence does not consist in many manifest distinctions of bodily performances, but in a heart prudent in its hope, accompanying the works with a right intention. For often these performances do not favour service, and the mind will be able to gain profit even without them. But without the prudence of the heart the body cannot profit even when it performs service. For if there is an opportunity to perform beautiful works, a godly man cannot refrain from showing his love, in the performance of manifest deeds. The former kind is always successful; the latter sometimes, and sometimes not.

Do not reckon it a small thing when the causes of the affections are afar off and removed from a man. The stirring of the inferior limbs which comes quickly into existence, without deliberations, that is to say impure pleasure which springs from under a wall with fervour and captivates the soul with madness,
293 the will being of no use — undoubtedly arises in the body from a repleted belly.

As a strong weapon in this strife reckon this, that a man be far from seeing women. What nature works by its power, even the foe cannot work it. Do not think that nature will forget till death that which God has sown and hidden in its roots, serving for the carrying on of our race and for testing us by strife. So every desire, whatever it be, is lulled to sleep in our limbs by keeping things at a distance; and its memory is given over to absorption and oblivion.

Thoughts of far off things which make a simple passage through the mind, are different from the dark and cold impulses that arise from the soul itself. Those thoughts also which arise from living contact which immerses the mind in a sight not to be forgotten and which excites passion near-at-hand, feeding it as oil feeds the flame of the lamp which was already flickering and nearly extinguished, are different from the stirring of the sea of the body through the impulses which agitate it against the ship of the mind.

The emotionability which exclusively rises from nature and which by God the creator has been deposited in us in order to educate the world of the body, is not able, without an increase from without, to bereave the will of its clearness, to

confuse it so that it lose its chastity. For God does not impart strength to nature so that it overcome the virtuous will.

294 But when a man is defeated by anger and by desire, it is not that which lies in nature which compels him to leave nature's domain and to cut the bonds of duty, but it is something which we add to nature by the intermediary of the will. All that God has made, He has made beautiful and in due proportions. And as long as the measure of natural things is rightly preserved in us they do not cause us to be swept from the way of God's law as it were by a deluge; only peaceful impulses stir in a body provided with the faculty of emotions, so long as we only know that passion exists, but not so when we also experience that it allures, or that it troubles the course of chastity and that it causes confusion or that it changes the state of peace into anger. If, however, we sometimes crave for things of the senses which are usually the source of unnatural anger, or for copious food and drink, or for constantly having the opportunity of seeing a woman near us, or of hearing tales about her which use to enflame in the body the fire of desires — then we cause the natural state of peace to be changed into that of bestiality, be it on account of the many humours in the arteries, or by various sights of [worldly] things.

It occurs also on account of that abandonment that arises from presumption. But this does not really belong to this category. The former cases we call strife for freedom and they belong to the common way of nature. Strife through abandonment arising from presumption we experience when we are occupied by labours and watchfulness for a long time and
295 then, in spite of them, the force of desire rushes in upon us with unnatural vehemence. But in other cases such events take place on account of our relaxation.

When nature is augmented in force by the senses or by the belly, it is not to be persuaded to keep henceforth the original measure of its stamp. He that rejects troubles and loneliness is involuntarily compelled to love sins. Without these we are not able to remain far from spiritual allurements. The latter diminish in accordance with the growth of the former. For troubles dissipate the pleasure of the affections; consolation, on the other hand, strengthens and induces them.

So it is clear that God and His angels rejoice at troubles;

Satan and his servants, however, at consolation. For if God's commandments are performed under bodily tortures and we reject these, it is clear that we contrive to reject Him that is the giver of the commandments. As by the affections, which are the offspring of consolation, we annihilate that which is the cause of excellence, namely hardship, so we make room for the affections to the same extent as we admit consolation. For in a tortured body deliberations cannot be distracted by idle things. When a man bears tortures with gladness, he has also strength enough to check the deliberations; because even the deliberations do not abhor labours.

Thus, when a man flogs himself with troubles, on account of the recollection of his previous sins, God, on His side, will
296 care for his peace; because He rejoices when He sees that the sinner himself has executed a judgment against himself because of his deviation from His way — a sign of repentance. And as he greatly troubles himself, so to the same extent the signs of honour granted to him by God, will increase. Every joy which is not caused by excellence will at once stir emotions of desire in him that has found it. This is to be understood of all desires connected with the affections, not of the natural ones only.

XXXIX

HELPFUL ADVICE BASED ON LOVE

Hardships for the sake of the good are loved as the good itself. Nobody can acquire real renunciation save him that is determined in his mind to bear troubles with pleasure. Nobody can bear trouble save him that believes that there is something more excellent than bodily consolation which he shall acquire in reward for trouble. Every one that has devoted himself to renunciation, will first perceive the love of trouble stir within himself; thereupon the thought of renunciating all worldly things will take shape in him. Every one who comes near unto trouble will at first be confirmed in faith; then he will come near unto trouble. He that renunciates [worldly] things without renunciating the senses, sight and hearing, he prepares twofold trouble for himself and he will find tribulation

in a twofold measure. Or rather: while he refrains from the use of things, he delights in them through the senses; and by the affections which they cause he experiences the same from
297 them that he had to endure in reality before; because the recollection of their customs is not effaced from the mind. If then imaginary representations existing in the mind alone can torture man, apart from the things corresponding to them in reality, what shall we say when the real things are close at hand?

Beautiful therefore is solitary life and very helpful, because it silences the deliberations with force and gives us strength to train ourselves in endurance; and teaches a man patience by the exercise given by cruel troubles, which accompany the life of the solitary necessarily.

Do not seek the advice of him that is not thy fellow in behaviour, though he be very prudent. A layman who has experienced things is more to be trusted than a sage who speaks on the basis of theoretical knowledge but without experience.

What is experience? Experience is not this that a man goes and touches things, without acquiring knowledge concerning their advantages and their defects and without remaining with them during a certain time. How often the faces of things give the impression of defect, whereas within them is found matter full of advantages. In the same way are to be judged things of the opposite aspect.

Many are those who from profitable things gather defects. Neither is the testimony of these concerning their knowledge to be trusted. This is only the case with him that has learned to examine things with patient distinction. Not all man's advice, therefore, is to be trusted; but [only] that of him who has behaved well before, who has knowledge founded upon experience in all things, who does not love himself, or who does not shun disdain.

298 As often as thou findest thy course in peace, without variations, then be suspicious. For thou art deviating from the divine ways trodden by the weary footsteps of the saints. The more thou proceedest on the way towards the city of the kingdom and approachest its neighbourhood, this will be the sign: that thou meetest hard temptations. And the more thou approachest, the more thou wilt find difficulties.

So, as often as thy soul on its way perceives varying states which cause difficulty thou must know that thy soul has secretly been advanced to a higher state and that it has acquired a gift of increase in comparison with the degree it occupied before.

The hard temptations into which God brings the soul are in accordance with the greatness of His gifts. If there is a weak soul which is not able to bear a very hard temptation and God deals meakly with it, then know with certainty that, as it is not capable of bearing a hard temptation, so it is not worthy of a large gift. As great temptations have been withdrawn from it, so large gifts are also withdrawn from it. God never gives a large gift and small temptations. So temptations are to be classed in accordance with gifts. Thus from the hardships to which thou hast been subjected thou mayest understand the measure of the greatness which thy soul has reached. In accordance with affection is consolation.

What then? Temptation, then gifts; or gifts and afterwards temptation? Temptation does not come if the soul has not received secretly greatness above its previous rank, as well as
299 the spirit of adoption as sons [1]). We have a proof of it in the temptation of our Lord and of the Apostles; for they were not allowed to be tempted before they had received the Comforter. Those who partake of good have also to bear temptations. Along with good are the oppressions [in behalf of it]. So it has pleased God, who is wise in all things.

Thus is the state of things; and accordingly, the apperception of temptations is anterior to the apperception of gifts, in order to test freedom. Grace never reaches a man before he has tasted temptations. In reality it is anterior; to the apperception it is posterior.

It is true therefore, that there are with thee at those times two opposite feelings, not resembling one another. What are they? Joy and fear. Joy, because thou findest thyself as appears from the sign of the temptations going the way that has been trodden by the saints, nay even by the saviour of the world. Fear, lest thou be tempted by these temptations through haughtiness. But the humble are gifted with prudence by grace, so as to be able to recognize the distinctions of these things, namely [to distinguish] between the temptations that arise from

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 15

haughtiness, and cheeks that burn from love. For the temptations that serve to improve behaviour are to be distinguished from those temptations which are permitted [by God] with the purpose of overcoming the presumption of the heart.

The temptations which take place under paternal control and serve to educate the soul, to train and to try it, so that it becomes illustrious, are: dejection, bodily weariness, relaxation
300 of the limbs, despondency, confusion of mind, bodily pains, temporary despair, darkness of deliberations, deprivation of human help [1], want of bodily provisions and so on. For by these man acquires a solitary soul and humbleness and a mortified heart; and these things try him by the love of the creator; and the governor administers them to those to whom they are sent, in accordance with the force necessary to bear them. In them are mingled consolations and distress, light and darkness, struggles and help. In short: they make narrow and they enlarge, which is the sign of the increase of help. The temptations which happen by permission unto those who venture to puff themselves up in their mind before the bounty of the author of our boons so as to become injuriously haughty regarding His boons — are the following: the manifest temptations of demons which lie without the domain of the psychic forces, so that [those who are tempted] are destitute of the force which imparts to them prudence; a vivid sensation of the impulses of fornication which are let loose in order to suppress their presumption; a being led easily to anger; the setting up of the will; love of victory in dispute; rashness; a heart inclined towards contempt; complete aberration of the mind; abuse of Him whose honour be blessed; foolish thoughts full of jest, or rather weeping; contempt as to men; [endangering] personal honour by impudence; ridiculousness through many contrivances of the demons, secretly and manifestly; love of mingling and intercourse with the world; frequent evasions
301 of foolish words; novel individual inventions and false prophecies; frequent promises above one's power; in the bodily sphere a continually hard involved fate most difficult of solution; perpetual meetings with evil and ungodly persons; falling into the hands of evil persons; perpetual emotions of the heart, caused by sudden fear without reason; repeated heavy falls

1) This enumeration has been taken over by Bar Hebraeus, *Book of the Dove*, p. 528

from rocks and high places and the like, such as destroys the body; the inability of the heart to lean on God's care and to confide as is becoming to faith; in short: all unbearable forces which it is above one's power to withstand, such as are let loose against the solitary and his surroundings.

All that I have expounded belongs to the temptations of haughtiness; the beginning of them shows itself in a man as soon as he becomes wise in his own eyes. He gets into all these evils according as he gives way to this deliberation [1]). So by distinguishing between thy temptations thou wilt gain insight into the narrow paths of thy mind. If thou lookest on and observest some [of these temptations] on thy mind's paths, thou must know that the quantity of temptation is in accordance with the defiling working of presumption.

Hear also another consideration. All hardships and troubles which are not borne with patience, cause twofold torture. A man's patience throws off his distress. Want of courage is the source of tortures. Patience is the source of consolations, a
302 certain strength born from courage of the heart. It is difficult for a man to find in his own soul in troubles, if it be not given him by God, that which is found through supplication and the pouring out of tears.

If God decrees that a man shall be troubled in a larger measure, He gives him into the hand of faintheartedness. And this will give birth to great despondency which gives the feeling of psychic suffocation; all these things taste after Hell. Thereupon the spirit of confusion is let loose against [the solitary], and from it rise innumerable temptations: perturbance, anger, abuse, vituperation, oscillating deliberations, moving from place to place, and the like. If thou sayest: Who is the cause of all these? I say: thou; because thou didst not care to find out the means to heal them. There is one remedy for all these and by it a man will at once find consolation within himself. What is this then? Humility of heart. Without it, it is not possible for a man to demolish the fence of these evil things, for he would find them far too strong. Be not angry with me for telling thee the truth: thou never hast sought this within thy soul. If thou wilt, follow it, then thou shalt see how it causes the destruction of thy evils.

1) viz. the deliberation of haughtiness

In accordance with thy humility will be given thee endurance in thy distress; and in accordance with thy endurance its weight will be lightened from thy soul which will be con-
303 soled in its troubles; and in accordance with the consolation of thy soul, thy love in God will increase; and in accordance with thy love thy spiritual joy will increase. When our compassionate Father is of the will to relieve those who are real sons in their temptations, He does not take them away from them, but He imparts to them endurance under temptations, and all that good which they receive through it, to the perfection of their souls. May Christ in His grace make us worthy of bearing evils for the sake of His love, with thanksgivings of the heart. Amen.

XI.

EXPOSITION CONCERNING THE DEGREES OF THE PATH, NAMELY CONCERNING THE POWER OF MINISTRATION OF EACH OF THEM

Bodily discipline in solitude purifies the body from the material elements in it. Mental discipline makes the soul humble and purifies it from the material impulses that tend towards decaying things, by changing their affectible nature into motions of contemplation. And this will bring the soul near to the nakedness of the mind that is called immaterial contemplation; this is spiritual discipline. It elevates the intellect above earthly things and brings it near to primordial spiritual contemplation; it directs the intellect towards God by the sight of unspeakable glory and it delights spiritually in the hope of future things, [thinking of] what and how each of them will be [1]).

Bodily labours are called bodily discipline unto God. For
304 they serve for the purification of the body through the service of excellence which is manifest personal works, by which man is purified from the pas of the flesh. Mental discipline is labour of the heart. It is the thinking, without cessation, of the great coming judgment, in constant prayer of the heart, and of God's providence and care for this world in its individuals and in its

1) The Greek translation has the right division of the text here

species. This is also the regarding of the domain of the inner affections, lest any of them pass into the hidden and spiritual place. This is the labour of the heart which is called mental discipline.

By this labour of discipline, which is called psychic service, the heart is subtilized and torn away from participation in decay, viz. in the praeternatural affections; from here onwards the heart begins to be often set in emotion by insight into the things of the senses which were created to the purpose of the education of the body and which administer strength to the four elements which are in the body.

Spiritual discipline is service without the senses; this is what has been written by the Fathers, that when the mind of the saints was gifted with personal contemplation, then the heaviness of body was taken away. And further on sight will be spiritual sight.

Personal contemplation he uses in the sense of contemplation concerning the primordial creation of nature. From there one is easily moved onwards toward what is called solitary knowledge which is, according to a clear interpretation, ecstasy in God, this is the order of that high future state which will be given in freedom that lives in immortality, in that way of life
305 which will be after the resurrection. It will consist therein, that from that point onwards human nature will not be cut off from constant ecstasy in God, to mingle itself with any created being. If there were any other thing equal to Him, nature would sometimes follow Him, sometimes His equals. When, however, the beauty of all which exists in that future order of things, is inferior to His beauties, how should it be possible for the mind not to fix its gaze exclusively on Him? What then? Should mortality trouble it, or the heaviness of the flesh, or the remembrance of kindred, or natural wants, or the adversities which overtake it; or the distraction of ignorance, or the deficiency of nature, or the distraction caused by the elements, or intercourse with one another, or the influence of dejection, or the weariness of the flesh? If now in this world — while all these things are thus — the veil of the affections is sometimes withdrawn from before the eyes of the spirit so that it gazes at the glory, and the mind is drawn away in ecstasy — then, without doubt, if God had not limited the duration of these moments in this life, man would not come back from that

state [1]) his whole life, if he were allowed. Now when all these [earthly] things exist no longer and that endless order [has been established], and when we personally and practically abide in the habitations of the kingdom — if our behaviour be worthy — how then should the spirit find a way to remove itself from the wondrous sight of God and to dwell with any other? Woe
306 to us, who do not know for what state we are destined, reckoning as something this life of sickness and this animal state, and the world with its troubles and evils and pleasures.

O Christ, who art the only strong one, blessed is the man whom thou supportest and in whose heart are the steps towards thee. Turn thou, o Lord, our face away from the world by desire of Thee, so that we see it as it is, without taking shadows for truth. Throw, o Lord, zeal into our heart before death comes, that at the time of our departure we may know for what purpose our entrance in and our departure from this world have served. Then, fulfilling the work to which we were called in accordance with thy aim in placing us in this life first, we shall hope, with a mind full of confidence, to receive the great things which, according to the promises of the scriptures, in the second creation are prepared by Thy love, things the recollection of which we preserve with mystic faith.

Bodily purity is to be clean from filth. Psychic purity is to be free from hidden affections in the spirit. Purity of mind is to be purified by revelations from any emotion unto things which, in view of their material nature, lie in the domain of the senses. Children are pure in body and as to their soul they can be without affections. Yet no one will call them pure in mind. Purity of mind is perfection through training in
307 heavenly contemplation, so that the mind without the senses receives impulses from the spiritual powers of those worlds above, powers which are amazing, surpassing number, distinguished in demeanour, mingled in invisible service, subject to many variations at all times, on account of the motion of the divine revelations.

1) Litt. from there. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneades*, VI, 9 § 9

XLI

A LETTER WHICH HE WROTE TO ONE OF THE BRETHREN WHO LOVED SOLITUDE CONCERNING HOW SATAN CONTRIVES TO DIVERT THE ZEALOUS FROM CONSTANT SOLITUDE UNDER THE PRETEXT OF THE LOVE OF RELATIVES AND HONOURED MEN; AND THAT IT IS BECOMING THAT ALL SHOULD BE DESPISED IN THE EYES [OF THE SOLITARY] COMPARED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD WHICH IS FOUND IN SOLITUDE AS MAY BE SEEN IN THE EXAMPLE OF OUR ANCESTORS

Because I know that thou lovest solitude and that Satan, knowing the intention of thy mind, impedes thee in many respects under the pretext of excellence, in order to divert thee from this comprehensive and manifold excellence, o virtuous brother, I was anxious to help thy good will as one limb helps its partner, with an excellent word, which I have received from prudent men and from the writings of the Fathers and from experience. For if a man does not despise honour and dishonour and bear for the sake of solitude abuse and derision and loss, nay even blows, and become an object of laughter and be reckoned mad and foolish by those who see him, he
308 cannot master the advantages of solitude. For if a man once open the door to [worldly] things, Satan will not cease to bring unto him men under every pretext, a continual, innumerable series of associations. Therefore, my brother, if thou lovest the veracious discipline of solitude without distraction and shocks and sudden pauses, as it has been eminently practised by the ancients, thou wilt be able to carry out this laudable desire by trying to resemble thy Fathers and by retaining in thy mind, as if it were written down, the memory of their histories [ascertaining] that those of them who loved complete solitude, did not care to practise love of their fellows at the cost of distracting themselves, neither were they ashamed of avoiding such persons as were reputed to be in honour.

And though they were thus, devoted to complete solitude, yet they were not deemed by those who know and are wise,

to despise their brethren, nor were they thought of as scorners or destitute of distinctions, as it was pretended by some in the way of apology against those who honour quiet and reclusion more than meeting their fellows. For the man that has experienced the quiet of his cell does not avoid meetings because he despises his fellow, but because of the fruits he gathers from solitude.

How did they practise reclusion? Aba Arsenius would not meet with any one. Aba Theodore, when meeting anyone, was like a sharp sword; he did not greet anyone when he happened
309 to be outside his cell. But the holy Arsenius did not even greet him that came to greet him. Once one of the Fathers went to see Aba Arsenius who opened, thinking that it was his servant. When, however, he saw who it was he prostrated himself. And when the visitor sought to persuade him, saying: Rise, o father, that I may greet thee, were it only in the doorway, then I will go, the saint protested saying: I will not rise until thou goest; and he did not rise until the other had left him and was gone. Thus the blessed one acted, lest they should come again if he once gave way to them.

‚One of the Fathers' — pay careful attention to this phrase lest thou think perhaps that Aba Arsenius despised his visitor on account of his mean estate; but it was one of the Fathers who spoke to him.

But we have also a strong proof from another side, lest thou say that he despised one, but received another favourably on account of his high position and conversed with him. No, in his reclusion he avoided alike all kinds of association; and in his eyes to despise the association with high or low for the sake of solitude, and to bear the reproaches of all in view of the honour of solitude and silence, was one and the same thing. We know namely that once the blessed Theophilus, the archbishop of Alexandria, visited him accompanied by the judge of that place, because they longed for the honour of seeing the saints. As he sat with them he did not comfort them even with a single word such as would have been fitting their high position, although they were very eager to hear his speech.
310 And when the archbishop tried to bring him to speech, the solitary was silent for a short time, and answered, saying: If I speak to you, will you remember what I say? They promised to do so. Then the solitary said to them: Wherever you hear that Arsenius is, do not come near to that place.

Doest thou see the wonderful way of the man? Doest thou see how he despised the honour of men? The blessed one knew how to gather the fruits of solitude without a thought to the fact that he was in the presence of the katholikos, the head of the whole church. But he thought thus: I am now dead to the world; what profit will a dead man give the living? He was vituperated for this in a loving way by the blessed Macarius who said to him: Why doest thou flee from us? The holy solitary made a wonderful praiseworthy apology: God knows that I love you; but I cannot be with God and with men.

Another time the archbishop sent him a message concerning this subject. The solitary answered, saying: ‚If thou comest I shall open the door to thee. But if I open to thee, I shall open to every one. And if I open to every one, I shall not remain here'. This wonderful doctrine he had heard from none other than from a divine voice, saying: ‚Arsenius, flee from men and thou shalt live'. None of the idle men who seek an occupation, will venture to refute this message by his objections or to speak against it, as if to seek peace proceeded
311 from human invention. For this is a doctrine from heaven.

The opinion that this was said to him with a view to reclusion and retreat from the world only, not with the intention that he should also avoid the brethren, is refuted thereby that, when he had retreated from the world and was abiding in the monastery, he again prayed to our Lord in order that he should know to live well. ‚O Lord', he said, ‚teach me to live', thinking that now he would hear another message. The divine voice proclaimed the same words again, adding as in explanation: ‚Flee and be silent and keep in solitude. Though the sight of and intercourse with the brethren be very profitable to thee, still intercourse with them is not as profitable as withdrawal from them'.

When the blessed Arsenius, while he was still in the world, had heard by divine revelation the order to withdraw from it, and when the same had been said to him while he was with the brethren, he knew certainly that in order to acquire a steadfast life, not only withdrawal from lay people was necessary but from every human being. Lest any one should venture to speak against the divine voice, it was also said to Aba Antonius in a revelation: ‚If thou desirest to be in solitude,

do not only go to the Thebais, but to the heart of the desert. If now God in this way commands us to withdraw from all, and wishes that His friends dwell in solitude, who should then, for other reasons, cling to intercourse and the vicinity of men?
312 If watchfulness was profitable and withdrawal helpful to Antonius and Arsenius, how much more then to the weak? And if the solitude of those whose words and the help that is inspired by the sight of them the whole world needs, is estimated by God higher than their usefulness to mankind in its entirety, how much more will this be the case with him that is not able to guard even his own person properly.

We know another of the saints whose natural brother was ill. He lived as a recluse in a different cell. During the whole period of his brother's sickness he restrained his mercy, so that he did not go out to visit him. When the sick man was on the point of departing from this world, he sent his brother a message to this effect: Come that I may see thee before I depart the world, even if it be in the night. Then I will take leave from thee and go to rest. The blessed one, however, was not to be persuaded even at this time, when natural mercy usually is stirred, to transgress the voluntary borders, saying: ‚If I go out, my heart will not be pure before God, for I despise visiting spiritual brethren, should I then honour nature above Christ? So his brother died without his having seen him.

No one, therefore, should consider the weakness of feelings as an insuperable and invincible reason, nor as a providential institution, implying the denial of solitude. If the saints subdue nature which is so strong, and Christ, though despised in His children, loves to be where solitude is honoured, what other necessity should then exist which could not de despised when it presents itself? The commandment: Love the Lord thy God
313 with thy whole soul and with thy whole heart [1]) and more than the whole world and nature and what belongs to nature — is accomplished when thou abidest in solitude. And also the commandment ordering the love of our fellow men, is included in it. Wilt thou acquire the love of thy fellow man, according to the commandment of the Gospel, within thyself, then withdraw from him. Then the flame of his love will burn in thee and

1) Deuteronomy 6, 5

thou wilt run to see him as if thou wouldst see the angel of light. Doest thou further desire that thy beloved ones long after thee? See their faces at fixed days only. Verily, experience is the teacher of all. Be in health.

XLII

THE ANSWER HE SENT HIS NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL BROTHER WHO HAD TRIED TO PERSUADE HIM IN LETTERS THAT HE SHOULD VISIT HIM IN THE INHABITED WORLD BECAUSE HE LONGED TO SEE HIM

We are not strong, as thou supposest, o blessed one. Perhaps thou art acquainted with my weakness, but thou makest not much of my destruction. Constantly thou askest me this, placing nature above the thought which once burned in thee, showing thereby that thou doest not consider it even as a matter to be treated carefully, though to us it seems to be a matter of care. Do not ask from me, o my brother, what gives consolation to body and mind, but let me seek the salvation of my soul. Yet a short time and we shall have passed away from this world. It is not unknown to thee how many persons I should meet, if I went to thy dwelling-place; how many sorts of people and of places, before I should have
314 returned unto my place; and by meeting them, what cause for thought my soul would receive — my soul, that would be disturbed by the affections which would be awakened in it, after it has been left in peace by them a little. That the sight of lay people injures the solitary, is a fact with which thou art acquainted; not just the sight of women, but also of men.

Behold how many varying states pass through the mind of him that has for a long time been alone with his soul and then suddenly comes in contact with these things, hearing and seeing what he is not wont to see and to hear. If meeting his fellow brethren injures him that is engaged in the struggle and still wrestles with his foe, if the brethren are not in concordance with his aim, into what pit would we fall, that have to be freed from the sting of our foe? Especially those among

us] that know these things by long experience. Therefore I am not to be persuaded to do this without necessity. Our heart does not err after those who say that hearing and seeing will not harm us and that, in the desert or in the inhabited world, within our cell or without it, we are alike in our deliberations on account of our being at rest against perturbation as long as we do not experience evil varying states and as long as we do not perceive the meeting with persons and things by the shock of affections. Those who say this, do not even know it when they receive a blow. But as to us, we have not yet reached this psychic health. We suffer from rotting abscesses; which, if they be left without bandages but for one day, so that they appeared from under the plasters and the bonds, would abound with worms.

XLIII

315 PROFITABLE WORDS FULL OF SPIRITUAL WISDOM

Faith is the gate of the mysteries. What the bodily eye is for the things of the senses, the same is faith in connection with the treasures hidden to the eyes of the mind.

We possess two psychic eyes, as the Fathers say, just as we possess two bodily eyes. But both have not the same purpose as to sight.

With one we see the hidden glory of God which is concealed in the things of nature, His power and His wisdom, and His eternal care for us which by His peculiar providence is directed unto us. With the same eye we also see the spiritual classes of our fellow-beings.

With the other we see the glory of His holy nature. When our Lord desires to give us initiation to the spiritual mysteries, He opens in our mind the ocean of faith.

As a grace beyond a grace has repentance been given to man. Repentance is being born anew in God. That of which we have received the pledge by baptism, we receive as a gift by repentance. Repentance is the gate of mercy which is opened to all who seek it. Through this gate we go in to divine mercy. Apart from this entrance it is not possible to find

mercy. Because all have sinned, according to the words of scripture, and are justified freely by grace [1]). Repentance is a second grace; it is born in the heart from faith and fear. Fear is the paternal rod which guides us up to the spiritual Eden.
316 When we have arrived there, it leaves us and returns. Eden is the divine love wherein is the paradise of all goods, where the blessed Paul was sustained by supernatural food. When he had eaten from the tree of life which is there, he exclaimed: eye has not seen, nor ear heard neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him [2]). Adam was bereft of this tree by the promise of the Devil. The tree of life is the divine love which Adam lost by his fall, after which he worked and wearied himself. Those who are bereft of divine love are still eating the bread that is won by the sweat of their labour, even though they work righteousness, as was commanded to the head of our race when he lost it by his fall. Until we find love, we work in the earth with her thorns. Among thorns we sow and reap, even if we sow the seed of righteousness. Perpetually we are pricked by them, even if we are justified, and live with sweat on our faces.

When, however, we have found love, we eat the heavenly bread and we are sustained without labour and without weariness. Heavenly bread is that which has descended from heaven and which gives the world life; this is the food of angels. He that has found love eats Christ at all times and becomes immortal from thence onwards. For whoever eats of this bread shall not taste death in eternity. Blessed is he that
317 has eaten from the bread of love which is Jesus. Whoever is fed with love is fed with Christ, who is the allgoverning God. Witness is John who says: God is Love [3]). Thus he smells life from God, that lives with love in this creation. He breathes here of the air of resurrection. In this air the righteous will delight at resurrection. Love is the kingdom of which our Lord spoke when He symbolically promised the disciples that they would eat in His kingdom: ‚you shall eat and drink at the table of my kingdom'. What should they eat, if not love? Love is sufficient to feed man in stead of food and drink. This is the wine that gladdens the heart of man. Blessed is he

1) Cf. Rom. 3, 23 sq. 2) 1 Cor. 2, 9 3) 1 John 4, 16

who has drunk from this wine. This is the wine from which the lascivious have drunk and they became chaste, the sinners and they forgot the ways of offence, the drunkards and they became fasters; the rich and they became desirous of poverty, the poor and they became rich in hope; the sick and they became valiant; the fools and they became wise.

As it is not possible to cross the ocean without a boat or a ship, so no one can cross towards love, without fear. This foetid sea, which lies between us and the intelligible paradise, we cross in the boat of repentance, which has fear for a rudder. If the rudder of fear does not govern this ship of repentance, in which we cross the sea of this world towards God, we shall be drowned in the foetid sea. Repentance is the ship, fear is her governor, love is the divine port.

318 Fear places us in the ship of repentance and makes us cross the foetid sea of the world and brings us in the divine port which is love, towards which look all those who are weary and crushed by repentance.

When we have reached love, we have reached God and our way is ended and we have passed unto the island which lieth beyond the world, where is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost; to whom be glory and dominion. That He make us worthy to fear Him and to love Him. Amen.

XLIV

CONCERNING HOW MANY DEGREES KNOWLEDGE HAS AND CONCERNING THE DEGREES OF FAITH

There is a knowledge which is anterior to faith and there is a knowledge which is born from faith. The knowledge anterior to faith, is natural knowledge; that which is born from faith, is spiritual knowledge.

What is natural knowledge? Knowledge which distinguisheth good from evil and which is also called natural distinction. God has implanted in rational nature to know good from evil, naturally, without instruction, yet this knowledge increases through instruction. There is no one in whom this [knowledge] is not active; and this is the force of the knowledge of the rational

soul by nature, namely the distinction between good and evil is stirring in it naturally, without ceasing. Those who are defective in this respect are beneath the rank of reason. Those in whom this is found, stand upright in psychic nature, and
319 there has not been destroyed in them that which was given by God unto psychic nature, to the honour of His reason.

Those who have destroyed this knowledge which distinguishes between good and evil, are scorned by the prophet: man has no insight in his own honour [1]). The honour of rational nature is the faculty to distinguish between good and evil. Rightly the prophet compares those who have destroyed this faculty with the brutes who possess no distinguishing and rational soul. On account of this faculty we are naturally able to find the way of God, and this is the natural knowledge which is anterior to faith and this is the way unto God. On account of the fact that a man knows how to distinguish between good and evil, he receives faith. Witness is the force of nature to the fact that it is beautiful for a man to believe in Him that has created all these things and that he acknowledge the words of His commandments and performs them.

From the fact that he believes this, is born the fear of God. When man clings to the service of the fear of God, and by service proceeds to some extent in it, the spiritual knowledge is born of which we have said that it is born from faith. Not that it is simply born from faith. From simple faith only spiritual knowledge is not born, but from faith fear of God is born. And when we begin with the service of the fear of God, from the service of the fear of God spiritual knowledge is born, according to the word of the blessed commentator [2]): When a man possesses the will to cling to the fear of God and an upright mind he will easily receive the revelation of hidden
320 things. The revelation of hidden things he calls spiritual knowledge. Not that the fear of God brings this forth, it is not possible to bring forth that which is not implied in nature. But knowledge is to given gratuitously for the service of the fear of God.

When [3]) thou inquirest well thou wilt find that the service of the fear of God is repentance. And spiritual knowledge is, as we have said, that of which we have received the pledge

1) Cf. Psalms 49, 12, 20 2) Theodore of Mopsuestia 3) Cf. Introduction

in baptism and which we receive really by repentance. The gift of which we have said[1]) that we receive it by repentance, is spiritual knowledge, which is given gratuitously for the service of the fear of God. Spiritual knowledge is apperception of the things which are hidden. When a man perceives the things which are unseen but most profitable, after which spiritual knowledge is called, by this apperception is born a different faith. Not that it is contrary to the old faith, nay it even corroborates it. It is called the faith of sight. Hitherto there was hearing; now there is sight. Sight is more true than hearing.

All these things are born from that knowledge which distinguishes between good and evil and which is stirring in nature. And this is the seed of excellence, as it has been called. But when we conceal this by our will which loves desire, we lose all this good.

With this knowledge are connected a perpetual stabbing of the heart; distress and grief; fear of God; shame before nature; grief at the transitory things which [occupied the mind] before;
321 zeal for that which is becoming; perpetual remembrance of death, torturing thoughts of that transition and care for its provisions; passionate beseeching of God that we enter well that gate through which all nature has to pass; contempt of the world and noble strife for the sake of excellence. All these things are found in this natural knowledge. Man has to examine his discipline in view of these and when he is in accord with them, he goes in the way of nature. When he climbs higher and reaches love, he leaves the domain of nature and strife, fear and fatigue leave him alone.

In accordance with what has been said man has to measure his things [in order to know] in which way he is walking; in that which is beneath nature, in nature, or above nature. Through these distinctions which have been clearly expounded, a man may easily understand what the discipline of his whole life has to be. When thou art not in the things of nature which have been described here, nor in the things above nature it is clear that thou dwellest beneath nature.

1) p. 313

XLV

PROFITABLE ADVICE

There is no good impulse which does not fall in the heart as a gift from on high. There is no evil deliberation which does not approach the heart in the way of a temptation. A man that has attained the knowledge of his weakness has attained the summit of humility.

The conductor of the signs of God's goodness unto man is
322 a heart which is moved by perpetual gratefulness. The conductor of temptations unto the soul is the impulse of rebellion which is constantly stirring in the heart. God suffers every weakness of man; but He does not suffer a man who is constantly murmuring, without chastising him. The soul which is far from any splendour of knowledge, finds itself in these impulses.

The mouth which constantly praises, receives a blessing from God; the heart which is constantly grateful, is inhabited by grace.

Grace is preceded by humility; chastisement is preceded by presumption.

He that is uplifted in his heart on account of knowledge, is tempted by abuse; he that is uplifted on account of his excellent service, is surrounded by fornication. And he that extols himself on account of wisdom becomes entangled in dark traps.

The man that is far from any remembrance of God, yet bears in his heart care for his fellow, will be of evil remembrance. He that honours all men by his remembrance of God will find all men his helpers by the hidden decree of God.

He that gives an apology in behalf of the oppressed will find an advocate in his creator. He that gives his arm to the help of his fellow, will receive God's arm in stead of it. He that accuses his brother on account of his evil deeds will find God as his accuser. He that directs his brother in his inner apartment, cures his evil; he that accuses him before an assembly makes worse his wounds. He that cures his brother privately gives a proof of the strength of his love, but he who

exposes him in the presence of his comrades betrays the force of his envy.

A friend that vituperates in secret is a wise physician; but
323 he that cures in the presence of the public, is really a derider.

The token of compassion is forgiveness regarding all sins. The token of an evil mind are varying utterances unto the sinner.

He that combines with healing chastisement, chastises with love. He whose demand bears the character of revenge, is destitute of love. God chastises with love, not for the sake of revenge, this is far from Him. He demands that His image [1]) be healed; His anger does not endure until guidance is no longer possible; for He does not seek personal revenge. This is the intention of love; the chastisement of love aims at guidance; it does not aim at retribution.

The righteous who is wise resembles God. He never chastises man in retaliation for his sin, but either in order that he may be guided aright, or that others may be deterred. Other than this is no chastisement. But this [2]) is regarded as its image by the Spirit, the thought that was with God from eternity.

He that is pleased to think of God as the revenger, thinking that he acknowledges His justice, denounces Him as destitute of bounty. It is far from the fountain of love, the ocean full of bounty, that the idea of retribution should be found with Him. His aim is the guidance of men; and if it were not that we would be bereft of the honour of freedom, perhaps He would even not heal us by vituperation [3]). The domain of freedom regarding our deeds is the power with which frankness supplies reason. And also the latter adores the greatness of His bounty, because it is not His will that we rejoice at what is His, but as it were at the merits of our own deeds. And
324 though all is His, it is not His pleasure that we should think that we delight in what is His, but rather in what is ours.

In accordance with a man's goodness is he illuminated concerning God. According as he stretches himself towards the knowledge of God, does he approach unto freedom of soul.

He that tries to excel in beautiful things with a view to future reward, will be easily led to deviation. He that admires

1) man
2) chastisement on account of love
3) but by stronger methods

the power of his knowledge, when looking at the love which is in God will not be puffed up in mind even if his flesh should be cut off, nor will he deviate from excellence. He whose mind is illuminated concerning the rents for which we are indebted to God, descends unto the depth of humility, body and soul.

Before a man approaches unto knowledge, he will go up and down in his discipline. When, however, he has come near to knowledge he will wholly be raised up. Yet, however he be raised up, his advance in knowledge will not be complete, until the world of glory has come and he has received the whole of his treasure.

According as a man becomes perfect in his relation to God, will he follow Him closely. In the world of truth, He will show him His face, not however the face of His essence. The more the righteous advance to the vision of Him, the more they see an enigmatic sight, as an image shown in a mirror. There, however, they will see the revelation of truth.

Fire feeding upon dead wood is not easily extinguished. If the divine blaze falls in a heart cut off from the world, its flame is not to be extinguished and it will be even quicker than fire. When the power of the wine penetrates into the veins, the mind forgets the particulars of all things; when the
325 remembrance of God has taken hold of the soul, the recollection of visible things vanishes from the heart.

The mind that has found spiritual wisdom is like a man that has found on the ocean an equipped ship which, when he has got aboard, brings him from the ocean of this world to the island of the world to be. Just so the apperception of the future things in this world, is like a small island in the ocean. And he that has approached unto it, he will no more be vexed by the storms of temporal phantasies.

When the merchant has accomplished his business, he hastens to reach his home. As long as the monk still lives in the period of his service, he has anguish [by the thought] that he shall have to depart the body. As soon however as he is aware that he has redeemed his time [1]) and that he has taken his pledge, he longs for the world to be. As long as the merchant is on the sea, motion dominates his limbs; a storm may rise and the hope of his labour may sink. As long as the

1) Cf. Eph. 5, 16; Col. 4, 5

monk is in this world, fear dominates his service, lest a hurricane be stirred against him destroying the labour which he has wrought from his youth till his old age. The merchant looks towards land, the monk towards the time of his death. The sailor gazes at the stars as long as he is sailing on the ocean, and he directs his ship by them, that they may show him the harbour. The monk gazes at prayer, which directs his way [showing him] towards which harbour he has to direct his course. At prayer the monk gazes at all times, that it may show him the island where he may anchor his ship free from fear and where he may take on board provisions in order to
326 direct himself towards another island. Such is the course of the solitary as long as he is in this life. He departs from island to island, and from knowledge to knowledge. And as various islands he meets the various [kinds of] knowledge, till he goes ashore and directs his course towards the city of truth the inhabitants of which do no longer traffic, but every one is content with his goods. Blessed he whose course is not disturbed, on this wide ocean. Blessed is whose ship is not wrecked and who reaches that harbour with joy.

Naked the swimmer dives into the sea in order to find a pearl. Naked the wise monk will go through the creation in order to find the pearl Jesus Christ Himself. When he has found it, he will not seek to acquire any other thing. A pearl is preserved in a treasury; the solitary's delight is in solitude. A virgin is robbed in a crowd; the mind of a monk in intercourse. The bird flies to her nest from any place in order to produce young ones, and the discerning monk hastens to his cell in order to produce in it the fruits of life.

When the body of the serpent is crushed, it guards its head cautiously; the wise solitary guards his faith amidst all evils, cautiously, because it is the head of his life.

A cloud covers the sun: so much talk covers the soul which has begun to be illuminated by contemplative prayer.

The bird which is called hurba[1]) is glad and delights — so
327 the sages say — when she leaves the inhabited places and takes up her abode in the desert. And the soul of the solitary receives heavenly joy when it removes itself from men and takes up its abode in quiet places where it awaits the time

1) In Syriac hurba means at the same time desert and stork

of departure. It is told concerning the bird which is called the siren that whosoever hears her singing is allured by her in his course in the desert, and that by the sweetness of her melodies he forgets his life and falls down dead. This resembles what happens with the soul; when that heavenly sweetness falls into it which comes from the melodies of the words of God [and which is transmitted] by mental apperception, it follows [these sounds] so that it forgets its bodily life and leaves the body on account of its delight and is lifted up from this life unto God.

The life of this world is sweet to him that lives in a material way; not, however, so sweet as is departure from life unto him that departs from it by perception in God. A tree will not produce new buds until it has put off the old leaves; and the solitary will not produce new buds, through Jesus Christ, until he has shaken from his heart the memory of his past.

The wind makes the fruits ripe; and the spirit [1]) of God makes ripe the fruits in the soul. The shell in which the pearl is formed receives its full form from the air, as then saying has it still then, it is only mere flesh. And until the heart of the monk receives its heavenly fullness by understanding, its
328 service is still simple and it has no consolation within its shell.

The fruits of the trees are sour and disagreeable to the taste and are not apt to be eaten till they have become sweet by the sun; and the first labours of repentance are bitter and very unpleasant and without consolation to the solitary, until they are made sweet by the contemplation which withdraws the heart from earthly things so that it forgets itself.

The dog which licks the file drinks from his own blood; he does not recognize his hurt on account of the sweet taste; and the solitary who condescends to drink vain glory, sucks from his own life without being aware of his hurt, because of the momentary sweetness.

Glory on the part of worldly folk is like a rock hidden in the sea; it is not known to the sailor before his ship is split on it so that its bottom is pierced and it is filled with water. It is said therefore by the Fathers, that by glory all the affections return unto the soul, that once had been vanquished and had departed from it.

A small cloud covers the sphere; but the sun which is

1) wind and spirit are expressed by the same word in Syriac

behind it, is nevertheless real; and a little dejection covers the soul; yet the gladness which follows it is the more exhilarating.

The musician who plays the flute is not fed by the sound of its melodies. And when he ceases his music his stomach is the more hungry. And the sweetness of words without ritual performances does not satisfy; when a man no longer hears them he is the more confused.

As it is not possible for a man to drink wine without breathing forth its odour from his mouth, so it is not possible
329 that a man becomes worthy of spiritual rest in his discipline without the sage's perceiving a change in his state. The heart that has received the heavenly seed is changed in its speech, changed in its mind, changed in its discipline, changed in its senses; and in all that belongs to it, it is different from the other simple men, as a man that was asleep and has awakened from his sleep.

Do not approach the mysterious words in the scriptures without prayer and without asking help from God, saying: Lord, grant me to perceive the power that is in them. Deem prayer as the key to the insight of truth in scripture.

When thou desirest to approach unto God in thy heart, first show Him love in bodily things. Here is the beginning of discipline. For the heart greatly draws near to God by renunciating some special necessary thing and by application to labours. Even our Lord has laid here the foundation of perfection.

Account idleness the beginning of psychic darkness; oral intercourse as darkness beyond darkness; and the latter as the cause of the former. Even profitable words without measure cause darkness. The soul is shaken by frequent intercourse even if it is inclined and in a way near to the fear of God. Deem darkness of the soul as being an agent unto confusion. Darkness in the soul comes from disordered behaviour.

330 Measure and time in discipline illuminate the mind and keep confusion afar. When the mind is upset by disorder, it becomes dark. And when it has become dark, the soul is troubled. Peace comes from order; light is born from peace in the soul; from peace, joyous air in the mind. According as the heart approaches to wisdom, it receives the gladness which is in God. The difference between spiritual wisdom and worldly

wisdom thou perceivest in thy soul. In the former, silence reigns over thy soul; in the latter, it will be a fountain of distraction. When the former is present, thou wilt be greatly filled with humility, and quiet and peace will reign over all thy deliberations, thy limbs being quiet and at peace from turbulence and trouble. When the latter is present, thou wilt possess presumption in thy mind and varying unspeakable thoughts and mental bluntness and thy senses will be turbulent and impudent.

XLVI

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Do not think that a man who is tied to bodily things will approach to freedom of speech in prayer before God.

An avaricious soul is destitute of wisdom; and the one which is compassionate, is made wise by the spirit.

As oil feeds the flame of the torch, so compassion feeds knowledge in the soul.

The key of divine gifts unto the heart is given through love of the neighbour.

331 According as the heart is freed from the bonds of the body, to the same extent is opened before it the gate unto knowledge.

Deem the transition of the soul from world to world to happen by the reception of insight.

Laudable and excellent is the love of the neighbour, but only if the thought of it does not turn us from the love of God.

Delightful is intercourse with our spiritual brethren, but only if it be possible that we preserve along with it intercourse with our Lord. Beautiful, therefore, it is to trouble one self with these, in so far as it is ordered by duty, namely in so far as through it we do not fall short of the hidden service and constant intercourse with God. To disturb divine intercourse, means to erect human intercourse. The mind is not capacious enough for both kinds of intercourse.

The sight of worldly people troubles the soul that once has renunciated what is theirs, for the sake of the service of God. To these belongs constant intercourse, to this even the avoidance of sight.

Bodily labours are not impeded by impressions of the senses. He that on the ground of mental peace wishes to embrace gladness in hidden service will be disturbed in the quiet of his heart, even by voices without sight.

Inner deadness cannot exist except by the annihilation of the senses. Bodily discipline requires keenness of the senses; psychic discipline keenness of the heart. As the soul is more excellent in its nature than the body, so the service of the soul is more excellent than the discipline of the body. And as the body is anterior in existence to the soul, so are bodily duties anterior to the service of the soul.

Great is the power of a little discipline, if it is combined
33a with constancy. The soft drop on account of its constancy makes a hole even in hard rocks. When the spiritual man is near to being quickened in thee, death to all things will come to thee, and thy soul will become hot with gladness which has no equal amongst created beings, and thy deliberations will be concentrated within thee, on account of the sweetness in thy heart. But when the world is quickened in thee, distraction of mind will increase in thee, and lack of courage without constancy.

World I call the affections conceived by distraction. When they are born and have become fullgrown they become sin and kill man. As men are not born without a mother, so affections are not born without distraction of mind, nor does sin become fullgrown without intercourse with the affections. When patience increases in our soul, this is a sign thereof that it has secretly received the gift of consolation. Stronger is the power of patience than the emotions of gladness which stir in the heart.

Life in God is the fall of the senses. When the heart lives, the senses fall. The resurrection of the senses is the death of the heart. When the senses are quickened this is a sign thereof that the heart is dead regarding God.

The heart does not derive guidance from the virtues which are performed among men. Virtues which a man shows unto others, cannot purify the soul. Still they are taken into account with God, in view of wages and reward. But that excellence which a man performs unto himself, accomplishes the two: it is taken into account for reward, and it causes purification. Therefore desist from the former and cling to the latter. Without

application to the latter, to desist from the former means to
333 forsake God openly. The latter, however, fills also the place of the former without its being performed.

Be dead in life in order that thou mayest be free through thy being dead. Be dead to the world in order that thou mayest be free from laws. For none of those who walk in them can perfectly fulfill them in this life. Who is dead in his life, is free while alive, and alive while dead.

Painstaking regarding graceful words is understood by simplicity of heart coming from God.

The soul that perceives a life above bodily life, does not adorn itself for the world. If man has not found the former, he is scarcely able to despise the latter; to despise it utterly is absolutely impossible to him. And he that would try to do so compulsorily, would stir up in himself a great struggle. But if he has found the former kind of life, he can renunciate the latter without a struggle.

Comfort and laziness are the destruction of souls. They are able to harm even more than the demons. Where the soul dwelling in light resides, in laudable labours of virtue, there the demons are not able to work. But the soul which is dark becomes thereby a guide even for the demons, so that they can accomplish all kinds of evil things.

When a weak body is forced to accomplish too many labours, it will accumulate darkness upon darkness in the soul and conduct it more and more unto perturbation and obscurity. If the dense body, namely that of sound constitution, comes to laziness and takes its place in comfort, it accomplishes all kinds of evil in the soul which dwells in it. Even if the soul greatly rejoices in good, still, after a short time the body will bereave it of thoughts that rejoice in the good.

334 When, however, the soul is drunk with gladness because of its hope, and with the joy in God, the body will be without apperception of troubles, even if it be brought low. For it will bear a double load without becoming weary as is the case with the body that has become heavy; and the body will share in the delight of the soul, even though it be brought low, when the soul enters into spiritual gladness.

If thou guardest thy tongue, my brother, a gift will be given to thee from God, affectibility of the heart so as to see thyself in it; and thereby thou wilt enter into spiritual gladness.

If, however, thy tongue vanquish thee, believe what I say: thou wilt never save thyself from darkness.

If thou possessest not a pure heart, have at least a pure mouth. As the blessed John says: When thou wilt admonish a man unto beautiful things, first draw him near to bodily rest and honour him by a word full of love. There is nothing which makes a man so modest and persuades him to interchange evil things with good ones, as bodily comfort and honour which is shown to him by some one. The second means of persuasion is a man's effort to be a laudable example. He that has gained possession of his self by prayer and watchfulness will easily draw his neighbour unto life, even without wearying words and apperceptible admonition. Baseness, on the contrary, and relaxation do not only harm those who possess them, but also those who see them. As to the fact that a man by bestowing care upon himself can spur his fellows on to beautiful things and by the mere sight of him make those who are relaxed ashamed, no words are sufficient to tell
335 how blessed such a man is. The silent deed has a greater power to direct others than careful words which are contradicted by laxity of behaviour. When however thou directest thyself, thy neighbour will gain no small help.

The more a man enters into the struggle for the sake of God, the more he will approach unto the heart's freedom of speech in its prayer. And according as he is distracted by many people is he bereaved of help.

The soul that has rest from the stings of the body, will have peace in its emotions.

Be a free man as to the body, in order that thou mayest be deemed worthy of spiritual freedom. Walk in the yoke of thy freedom, lest thou be tied to the yoke of bondage to thy enemies.

If once thou hast shown in thy person an example of dissolution from temporal life, then through abandonment of the affairs of life thou wilt become wholly dead, as an example of the future dissolution, as the care of all things will be taken from thee by death. Be not angry at the blows of the body, which death will wholly take from thee. Be not afraid of death, for God will elevate thee above it.

XLVII

ON THE ANGELIC EMOTIONS STIRRING IN US BY DIVINE PROVIDENCE FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE SOUL IN SPIRITUAL THINGS

The first emotion that befalls a man by divine grace and draws the soul towards life, strikes the heart [with thought]
336 concerning the transitory character of this[1]) nature. This thought is naturally connected with contempt of the world. And then begin all the beautiful emotions which educate unto life. That divine power which accompanies man makes as it were a foundation in him, which desires to reveal life in him. As to this emotion which I mentioned, if a man does not extinguish it by clinging to the things of this world and to idle intercourse, and if he makes this emotion increase in his soul by perpetual concentration and by gazing at himself, he will bring himself near to that which no tongue is able to tell.

This thought is greatly hated by Satan and he strives with all his power to eradicate it from man. And if he were able to give him the kingdom of the whole earth in order to efface by thought of it from his mind this deliberation, he would not do otherwise. For Satan knows that if this recollection remains with him, his mind will no longer stay in this world of error, and his means will not reach man.

This sight is clad with fiery emotions and he that has caught it will no longer contemplate the world nor remain with the body.

Verily, my beloved, if God should grant this veracious sight unto the children of man for a short time, the course of the world would stand still. It is a bond before which nature cannot stand upright. And he unto whim this intercourse with his soul is given — verily, it is a gift from God, stronger than all
337 partial workings, which in this middle state are presented unto those who with an upright heart desire repentance. It is especially given to him of whom God knows that he is worthy of the real transition from this world unto profitable life, because He finds good will in him. It will increase and remain

1) earthly

with a man through his dwelling alone by himself. Let us ask this gift in prayer; and for the sake of this gift let us make long vigils. And as it is a gift without equal, let us keep watch with tears at the gate of our Lord, that He may give it us. Further we need not weary ourselves with the trouble of this world. This is the beginning of the impulse of life, which will fully bring about in a man the perfection of righteousness.

On the second working upon man. When a man follows his discipline perfectly and when he has succeeded in rising above the degree of repentance, and when he is near to taste the contemplation of his service, when it is given him from above to taste the delight of spiritual knowledge, a second working, after the first, will take its origin here.

In the first place man is assured concerning God's care for him and illuminated concerning His love of the creatures — rational creatures — and His manifold care for the things which regard them. Then there arises in him that sweetness of God and the flame of His love which burns in the heart and kindles all the affections of body and of soul. And this power he will perceive in all the species[1]) of the creation and all things which he meets. From time to time he will become
358 drunk by it as by wine; his limbs will relax, his mind will stand still and his heart will follow God as a captive. And so he will be, as I have said, like a man drunk by wine. And according as his inner senses are strengthened, so this sight will be strengthened and according as he is careful about discipline and watchfulness and applies himself to recitation and prayer, so the power of sight will be founded and bound in him.

In truth, my brethren, he that reaches this from time to time, will not remember that he is clad with a body, nor will he know that he is in the world. This is the beginning of spiritual sight in a man, and this is the principle of all intellectual revelations. By this the intellect will be educated unto hidden things and become mature, and by this he will be gradually elevated unto other things which are higher than human nature. In short, by this will be conducted unto man all divine visions and spiritual revelations which the saints

1) lit.: natures

receive in this world. Thus nature can become acquainted with the gift of revelations that happen in this life.

This is the root of our apperception in our Creator. Blessed is he that has preserved this good seed when it fell in his soul, and has made it to increase, without destroying it by idle things and by the distraction of that which is transitory.

XLVIII

ON THE VARYING STATES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS TO WHICH THE SOUL IS SUBJECT AT ALL TIMES AND ON THE TRAINING IT ACQUIRES IN THINGS OF THE RIGHT HAND AND OF THE LEFT

Let us look at ourselves at the time of service and prayer. If we possess contemplation regarding the words of the Psalms and of prayer, this has its origin in real solitude.

Let us not be perturbed when we are in darkness; especially if we are not the cause of it ourselves. For it is brought about by divine care, for causes which are known only to it. Our soul is then suffocated and, as it were, in the midst of storms. Whether a man approach unto a book of service — to whatever he approaches, it is darkness upon darkness which he finds in it, so that he desists from all effort. How many a time is he not even allowed to approach. He is wholly unable to believe that a different state will come upon him so that he will be in peace again. This hour is full of despair and fear; and the hope in God and the consolation of faith are wholly effaced from the soul, which is totally filled with doubt and fear.

Those who are tempted by the storm of this time, know by experience the varying state which will follow after it. Never will God leave the soul a whole day in this state; otherwise it would lose life and all Christian hope. But gradually — however strong this darkness may be — a turn unto life will appear from it. Unto thee, o man, I give the advice: if thou possessest no power to dominate thy soul and to fall upon thy face in prayer, envelop thy head in thy mantle and lie down till the hour of darkness has passed away from thee.

Leave not, however, thy cell. By this temptation are tried especially those who are willing to walk in mental discipline and who in their course are running toward the consolation which comes from faith.

This dark hour, therefore, tortures them, more than by any thing else, by spiritual doubt. It is also accompanied by strong abuse; sometimes even by doubt of the resurrection and other points which it is not necessary to mention.

All these things we have experienced many times and recorded for the consolation of many. Those who are occupied by bodily labours only are wholly removed from this struggle. They are attacked by dejection with which every man is acquainted and which differs from the state mentioned and similar ones. The healing of the latter — viz. its consolation — has its origin in solitude. By intercourse a man will never obtain the light of consolation, but in the course of time he will find alleviation. Afterwards, however, it will attack him vehemently. He needs an enlightened man, experienced in these things, by whom he may be illuminated and encouraged from time to time, though not constantly. Blessed is he that endures under these circumstances the abiding indoors, he that after these things reaches the large and strong apartment, as the Fathers say. Not at once, however, will this struggle cease; neither will grace come and dwell in the soul completely at once, but
341 gradually. One, and the other: sometimes temptation, sometimes consolation. Some of it will remain, even till departure. Complete deliverance from it we do not expect here, nor complete consolation.

Thus has it pleased God that our temporal life should be provided. And these things are for those that walk in the way.

XLIX

ON THE GLOOMY DARKNESS WHICH DURING SOLITUDE BEFALLS THOSE WHO WALK IN THE DISCIPLINE OF KNOWLEDGE

At the time of obscurity, more than any thing kneeling is helpful. And even the fact that thou art not able to offer this [unto God] and to cling to it, is [an act of war] on the part

of Satan. It is thy duty to fight against this. For Satan knows the help [provided] by kneeling; therefore he strives with his whole power to withhold thee from offering it. And when thou art near to falling on thy face, he will trouble thee. And even if thou vanquishest him and bendest thy knees he will force thee not to abide by it.

Even if our emotions are cold and dark, we should persevere in kneeling. Even if our heart be dead at these times; even if we are destitute of prayer, so that we know not what to say in that even words of beseeching will not come to us, nor supplication — even then we should be found prostrated constantly, even if in silence.

If we need any help from God, yet remain destitute of help,
342 we rightly do not obtain it, because we do not approach unto God in prayer with zeal and fervour, night and day, crying to Him in pain, because we expect that He will give it us spontaneously. But He contrives an intermediate cause that we should approach unto Him, by leaving us in trouble. And by His refraining from delivering us, He produces our help in that we prolong [our standing] at His door in prayer.

But we, when helpful things come to us, are stupefied and hesitating and we deliver ourselves to despondency and aversion and dejection, and we are colder than water. Under all evils and temptations which befall thee, from without and from within, the way of prayer lies before thee. Fall on thy face, even if for a day and night only and beseech God with a passionate heart. And God, who is merciful and good, will not hesitate to give consolation and relief when He sees that thou beseechest Him in the pain of thy heart, except thou shouldst not ask in the [right] way.

During thy whole life thou hast to act thus. Thou wilt gain and lose. And then thou shalt beseech in pain and He will give thee. And again He will go away from thee; and now thou wilt meet with such a thing that thou wilt think that the end of all has come. And when thou askest Him, in the next hour it will have disappeared. Thus this course has been ordained; be not dejected.

During that time of deep darkness that lies upon the soul, we have to be watchful against dejection. Listen to me, o my brother, fight against [the inclination] to leave thy cell, as a
343 woman in travail against her pains, and as a man who bears

tortures. For the foe greatly purposes, more than anything, to make thee leave thy cell, under the pretext of being unable to endure, at the time of struggle. And with all his power he will compel thee to go outdoors, lest, staying, thou shouldst seek refuge with kneeling. Greatly, more than anything, is he afraid of this act.

I.

SHORT SECTIONS CONTAINING VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS IN WHICH IS SHOWN THE INJURY CAUSED BY FOOLISH ZEAL UNDER THE PRETEXT OF FEAR OF GOD AND THE PROFIT ORIGINATING IN QUIETNESS; TOGETHER WITH OTHER SUBJECTS

A zealous man will never reach peace of mind. And he that is destitute of peace is also destitute of gladness. Peace of mind is called complete health, zeal is the contrary of peace. He, therefore, that is moved by zeal suffers from a severe illness. Before thou art deemed, o man, to move thy zeal against the illness of others, thou has driven away health from thyself. Thou hast rather to bestow care upon the healing of thyself. If thou desirest however to heal the sick, know that those who are sick, are in want of nursing more than in want of vituperation. So, whilst thou doest not help others, thou vexest thyself by a severe illness. Zeal is not counted
344 among man as a form of wisdom, but as one of the illnesses of the soul, namely a narrowmindedness and a great ignorance. The principle of divine wisdom is quietness acquired by magnanimity, and the endurance of human weaknesses. Ye, therefore, that are strong, bear the loads of the sick, and direct the transgressor in a meek spirit. The Apostle counts among the fruits of the Holy Spirit peace and patience [1].

A heart full of suffering on account of its insufficiency regarding manifest bodily labours, is the acme of all bodily labours.

Bodily labours, without mental suffering, are as a body without a soul.

He that suffers in his heart and is lax regarding his senses,

1) Gal 5, 22

is as a sick man whose body is aching and whose mouth indulges in all obnoxious kinds of food. He that suffers in his heart and is lax regarding his senses, is as a man who has an only son and slays him with his own hands limb by limb.

Suffering of the mind is an honourable gift from God; and he that bears it together with the duties it imposes, is as a man who bears holiness in his limbs. A man who is dominated by his tongue in all things, good and evil, is not deemed worthy of this gift.

Repentance along with intercourse is as a pierced jar.

Blame along with a gift is a knife concealed in honey.

Chastity and intercourse with women are as a lioness and a lamb in one house.

Labours and depravity before God are as a man who slaughters a son before his father. He that is sick in his soul
345 and directs his comrades, is as a blind man that shows the way.

Compassion and justice in one soul are as a man adoring God and idols in one house. Everywhere compassion is the enemy of justice.

Justice is the equality of the even scale which gives to every man as he deserves without deviation to any side and without any consideration of a reward for it [1]).

Compassion is an affection which is stirred by bounty and which goes out to every one for their support. It does not repay him that has deserved evil. To him that has deserved good, it gives a double portion. If the former stands on the side of righteousness, then the latter is on the side of evil. As stubbles and fire cannot remain together in one room, so justice and compassion cannot in one soul.

As a grain of sand does not balance a load of gold, so the effect of God's justice does not counterbalance His compassion.

As a handful of sand thrown into the ocean, so are the sins of all flesh as compared with God's mind.

As a fountain that flows abundantly is not dammed by a handful of earth so the mercy of the Creator is not vanquished by the wickedness of the creatures.

As one that sows in the sea and expects that he shall reap, so is he that prays while preserving rancour.

As the flames of the fire cannot be checked from going

1) δεδί

upwards, so the prayers of the merciful cannot be checked from ascending towards heaven.

346 As the violence of water in a narrow place, so is the force of anger when it has found a place in our mind.

He that has humility in his heart, has become dead to the world. He that is dead to the world, is dead to affections. To him that is dead in his heart regarding his relatives, Satan is dead. He that has found envy has also found him that found it for the first time [1]).

There is a humility that has its origin in the fear of God and there is a humility that arises through the love of God. Some people are made humble by their fear, others by their joy in Him. The former live with limbs subdued and ordered senses and in perpetual contrition of heart; the latter in full exuberance and with an exulting heart which is never checked. Love does not know bashfulness; these, therefore, do not know how to regulate or to order their limbs. Love naturally possesses frankness and oblivion of measure.

Blessed is he that has found Thee, thou harbour of all joys.

Beloved of God is the congregation of the humble, as the congregation of the seraphs.

A chaste body is dearer to God than a pure offering. Both, however, prepare a dwelling-place for the Trinity in the soul. Walk with thy friends in a reserved attitude; in doing so thou wilt be of profit unto thyself and unto them. For usually under the pretext of friendship the soul casts off the reins of watchfulness.

Be cautious regarding intercourse; it is not always profitable. In the congregation honour silence; for it prevents many wrongs.

347 Be not so cautious regarding the belly, as regarding sight. Inner war is in any respect easier.

Do not believe, o brother, that inner deliberations can be regulated without the regulation of the body.

Fear customs rather than enemies. He that fosters a custom is as one fostering fire. Both display their vigour when they have acquired free play. When custom, however, has been repelled the first time it demands access, thou wilt find it weaker, a second time. But if thou fulfillest its desire the first time, thou wilt find it stronger when it demands access unto

1) I am not certain of the sense of these words.

thee the second time. Under all circumstances this recollection will strengthen thee.

Help proceeding from watchfulness is better than help proceeding from labours.

Be not friends with one that loves laughter and derision; for he will drag thee towards lax customs. Be not joyous with him whose behaviour is lax; but be cautious against hating him. If he desires to remain standing, try to help him; and care for his existence, until death. If thou art yet ill, thou hast not to play the physician; stretch the end of thy staff toward him, and so on.

Speak with watchfulness before a boaster and one who is sick with envy. For while thou speakest he gives in his heart thy words the explanation he desires. He seizes the opportunity to make others stumble, even through beautiful things in thee. And thy words will be changed in his mind into opportunities of illnesses.

148 Frown upon him that begins to speak to thee concerning his brothers. Doing so thou wilt be found cautious by God and by him.

If thou givest something to one who is poor, let gladness of face and kind words and encouragement for his suffering precede thy gift. When thou doest this, by thy gift the delight of his mind will be greater than the want of his body.

On the day that thou openest thy mouth to speak against a man, deem thy soul as dead to God and void of all thy labours, even if it is thought that thou art moved to speak by [the desire to] direct and to build. Wherefore should a man demolish his own building and order that of his neighbour?

On the day that thou sufferest on behalf of a man in any way, be it on behalf of the good or on behalf of the wicked, in body or in mind, deem thyself on that day to be a martyr and as one that has been deemed worthy of confessorship for the sake of Christ. Remember that Christ died for the wicked, according to the words of the scripture, not for the good. Behold how great a thing it is to suffer for the evil and to do good to the sinners, even greater than to do this for the righteous. The Apostle reminds thee of this as of an amazing thing.

If thou art able to acquire righteousness within thyself, be not anxious to seek other righteousness.

Anterior to all thy deeds are chasteness of body and purity of heart. Without them every deed is vain before God.

Any work which thou performest without deliberation and examination — know that thy labour upon it is vain even
349 though it be beautiful. God counts as righteousness every matter of discrimination, not fortuitous performances.

A lamp in the sun — the righteous who is not wise.

Seed on a rock — prayer of one harbouring rancour.

A tree without fruits — an ascetic without compassion.

A venemous arrow — vituperation that has its origin in envy.

A hidden snare — the praise of the cunning.

A foolish counsellor — a blind watchman.

Sorrow of heart — sitting with sinners.

A sweet fountain — intercourse with the wise.

A wise counsellor — a wall to rely upon.

A foolish friend — a treasure of deficiency.

Better it is to see a mourning assembly than to see a wise man clinging to a fool.

Better it is to dwell with the beasts than to dwell with people affected by envy.

Better it is to dwell in a grave than to dwell with people who behave in a depraved way.

Sit with vultures but not with those who are covetous.

Associate with the murderer, but not with the quarrelsome.

Have intercourse with the swine, but not with the loquacious.

Better is the young of the swine than the mouth of the loquacious.

Sit amidst lions, but not amidst the haughty.

Be the persecuted, not the persecutor.

Be the crucified, not the crucifyer.

Be treated unjustly rather than treat unjustly.

Be the oppressed, not the oppressor.

Be peaceful, not a zealot.

Deal beneficiently, not justly. Justice does not belong to the behaviour of Christianity and no mention is made of it in the doctrine of Christ.

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep;
350 this is a sign of serenity. With the sick, be as if sick; with the sinners practise mourning and with the converted rejoice.

Be a friend of all men, but a solitary in thy mind.

Join in the suffering of all men, but hold thy body far from all men.

Do not vituperate any one and do not direct any one, not even those who are very evil in their behaviour.

Spread thy mantle over the sinner and cover him.

If thou art not able to take upon thee his transgressions and to receive chastisement in his stead, at least suffer exposure, in order not to expose him.

Do not quarrel for the sake of the belly.

Do not hate for the sake of honour.

Do not love to be a judge.

Thou must know, o my brother, that we stay indoors in order not to know the evil deeds of men. For when we consider all men as good, we shall reach purity in our mind. But if we also become vituperators and chastisers and judges and vindicators, persecutators and critics, in what respect then is dwelling in the towns inferior to abiding in the desert?

If thou art not quiet in thy heart, be quiet with thy tongue.

If thou art not able to be a ruler of thy deliberations, be a ruler of thy senses.

If thou art not a solitary in mind, be a solitary in body.

If thou art not able to labour with thy body, suffer in thy mind.

If thou art not able to watch on thy feet, watch on thy bed.

If thou hast no sufficient power to fast during the night, fast at least in the evening. And if thou hast no force for fasting
351 in the evening, be on thy guard at least against satiety.

If thou art no saint in thy heart, be a saint in thy body. If thou art no mourner[1]) in thy heart, let at least thy face be clad with mourning.

If thou art not able to justify thyself, then speak as a sinner.

If thou art not a peacemaker, be at least not a disturber.

If thou art not able to be valiant, be a humble man in thy mind.

If thou art not a victor, be not wrath with the vanquished.

If thou hast no sufficient power to shut the mouth of him that speaks against his neighbour, guard at least thyself, lest thou become his partner.

Know that if fire goes out from thee and kindles others, the souls of all those to whom some of this fire has been im

1) abila, also a monk

parted, will be demanded at thy hands. And if thou doest not throw out fire, but doest agree with him that does, and compliest with his deed, thou wilt be his partner in judgment.

If thou lovest peace, be peaceful. And if thou hast been deemed worthy of peace, rejoice at all times. Pray for insight, not for gold.

Be clad with humility, not with byssus. Acquire peace, not a kingdom.

No one has insight without being humble. He that is not humble, has no insight. No one is humble without having peace; he that has no peace is not humble either. No one has peace without rejoicing. While men walk in all the ways which there are in this world, they do not find peace, until they approach unto hope in God. The heart does not acquire peace from vexations and offences, until it approaches unto this place. But hope will give them peace and pour gladness
332 into their heart. This is what that adorable mouth, full of holiness, has said: come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest[1]. Draw near to the hope which is in me, and desist from the many ways, and ye will have rest from labours and from fear. Hope in God elevates the heart. Fear of Hell breaks it.

The light of the mind gives birth to faith. Faith gives birth to the consolation of hope. Hope makes the heart strong. Faith is the revelation of insight. When the mind is dark, faith is hidden, and fear reigns in us and cuts off our hope. Faith through instruction does not free a man from presumption and doubts; only that faith which dawns by insight. It is called the revelation of truth.

As long as faith understands God as God, through the revelation of insight, fear will not approach unto the heart. When we are left in darkness and we lose this insight that we may become humble, fear assails us which brings us near to humility and repentance.

The son of God has borne the cross and sinners have acquired courage in repentance.

If the habit of repentance has driven away the anger of the King, he will not now reject your sincere mind. If the habit of humility can drive away God's anger from him who knows

1) Matthew 11, 28

himself not to be true, how much more will this be the case with you who are suffering in truth for your trespasses. Sufficient is the suffering of the mind in place of all bodily labours, according to the word of the commentator [1]).

353 A temple of grace is he that is mingled with God by constantly thinking of that which belongs to him. What is thinking of that which belongs to him? It is the constant hunting after his rest; suffering at all times; the toil of constant care concerning those things which always remain imperfect on account of the wretchedness of nature; the constant sorrow at these things which the mind bears under strong emotions and which it places before itself with humble contrition as an offering during prayer. As much as possible it despises the care of the body, according to its power. Such is he that bears in his soul the constant recollection of God, as the blessed Basil, the bishop, says.

Prayer without distraction is that prayer which produces in the soul the constant thought of God. For also this is God's incarnation, that He dwells in us by our constant recollection of Him with painstaking care of the heart, seeking His pleasure. Involuntary evil deliberations have their origin in previous laxity.

O men and brothers, ye that desire to give some rest to the body in the way of recreation, for the sake of the service of God, in order to acquire force and to return to your service — let us not weaken our perfect watchfulness during the few days of rest, giving our whole self to relaxation as if we were men who have not the intention to return unto their service.

Those who in the time of peace are wounded by arrows, are the people who bear the cause of this in themselves, namely wilful freedom of speech. And the dirty clothes with which they see themselves clad in a holy place (namely at the
351 time when God is astir in their soul) are those which they have woven in the time of relaxation. The things which put us to shame when, at the time of pure prayer, we wish to offer them, are those with which we have accustomed ourselves at the time when we esteemed our senses too low.

Watchfulness helps a man more than labours; and relaxation injures him more than rest. In rest there arise internal wars

1) Theodore

which a man is able to overcome vexing though they may be to him. For as soon as he gives up rest and returns to the place of labour, they are put to silence and flee from him. Not so it is with that which is born from relaxation, though relaxation is born from rest. For as long as man is in the place of his freedom, he is able to lay hand on himself and place himself under the order of his laws; he is still in the place of his freedom. But when he is relaxed, he has left the place of freedom. If a man does not throw away completely all his watchfulness, he is not compelled against his will to comply with those things which he does not like. And if he does not completely give up the domain of his freedom, he will not be assailed by accidents, which bind him so that he is not able to withstand necessity. Do not give up the place of freedom on account of any of thy senses, o man; else thou wilst not be able to return thereto. Rest injures the novices only; re-
355 laxation also the perfect and the aged. Those who let themselves be directed to the comfort of bad deliberations, may find the way back by watchfulness and gain the height of good behaviour. But as for those who, confiding in their labours, have neglected cautiousness, and have been captivated by the relaxations of life, after [they had walked on] the height of behaviour, some have been wounded in the country of the enemies and have died during the time of peace, others have set out for the sake of the merchandise of life, and have exposed their soul to offence.

We have no difficulties when we trespass in a thing, but only when we persevere in it. Trespasses will sometimes happen even to the cautious.

But clinging to them is utter death. Suffering which we endure for the sake of things in which we transgress fortuitously, are counted as pure service on our part, by the grace that sustains our life.

He that sins a second time expecting [forgiveness] walks with God cunningly. Unexpectedly the rope of punishment will be thrown upon him and he will not reach the time for which he had hoped.

If a man's senses are lax, his heart is also lax. The service of the heart is a bond of the outward members, if a man performs it with discrimination as the Fathers who were before us. This is known from other tokens which are seen in him:

namely that he is not entangled in bodily profits, that he does
356 not love money, and that he is wholly void of anger. Where on the contrary these three are found: the love of bodily profits to a small or to a large extent, and quick anger, and giving way to the belly (even in the case of the former saints), know that the relaxation in outward things originates in inward lack of patience, not in the baseness of the discriminating soul. How else could it be possible that such a one did not possess disregard of bodily things, and quietness?

To expose oneself to disdain [1]) discriminately is to be freed from all things, to disregard life and to love men.

If thou endurest willingly injuries for the sake of God, thou art pure within.

If thou doest not despise any one on account of his stains, thou art surely a free man.

If thou doest not run to encounter those who honour thee, and if thou art not moved by meeting those who do not concord with thee, thou art really dead to this life.

Watchfulness with discrimination is better than all kinds of behaviour to all kinds of men.

Do not hate the sinner [2]); we are all worthy of condemnation. If thou art moved for the sake of God, weep over him. Why shouldst thou hate him? Thou meanst to hate his sins? Pray on his behalf, that thou mayest resemble Christ, who was not angry with sinners but prayed on their behalf. Hast thou not seen how He wept for Jerusalem? In many things we are made mock of by Satan. Why should we hate them that are made mock of like ourselves by the same one that makes mock of
357 us? Why hatest thou the sinner, o man? Perhaps because he is not righteous as thou art? And how art thou righteous, that hast no love? And if thou hast love, why doest thou not weep for him, instead of persecuting him? It is through ignorance that some people, reputed to be discriminating, are moved by the deeds of sinners.

Be a herald of God's goodness, because He provides for thee who art not worthy of it. And though thou art guilty of many things, it is not known that he is desirous of revenge. And for the few things in which thou showest [good] will, he remunerates thee with many. Do not call God just anymore,

1) ܫܛܝܬܐ. Cf. Introduction. 2) With this passage cf. p. 14, 79, 348, 359.

for His justice is not known in His dealings with thee. Though David called Him just and righteous, still His son has made it clear to us that He is good and kind. For He is kind towards the evil and the miscreant. How callest thou God just when thou comest across the section on the hire of the workmen? Friend, I do thee no wrong. I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Or is thy eye evil because I am good [1]? How can any one call God just if he come across the story of the prodigal son? When he had spent all in fornication, it was only on account of the contrition he showed that [the father] ran to throw himself at his neck and made him lord of all his possessions. No one else can say concerning Him that he doubts His goodness. His son testifies this concerning Him. How could there be justice in God, when Christ died
358 for us who were sinners? If He is compassionate here, we believe that there will be no change in Him. Far be it from us that we should wickedly think that God could not possibly be compassionate. God's properties are not liable to variations as those of mortals. It is not possible that He sometimes should not possess a thing, and afterwards should possess it, or that what He possesses should diminish or increase as that which creatures possess. But that which God possesses is with Him from eternity, and it is with Him for ever, as also the blessed commentator [2] says in his exposition on the creation.

Fear before His love, not before the reputation of harshness with which He has been charged. Love Him because it is our duty to love Him; not for those things which He will give, but also because of those which we have received. Even if He had made this world only for our sake, who could sufficiently tell His bounty? Where is the remuneration for Him in our deeds? Who has persuaded Him beforehand to bring us into existence? And who will intercede with Him for our sake when we shall be in a state of oblivion as if we were not? Who will stir our destruction into life? And from where will the impulse of knowledge be cast into [what is] dust? O the wonder of God's compassion. O the amazement of the bounty of our Creator. O the power of His almightiness. O His immeasurable kindness regarding our nature, that He also brings sinners into

1) Matt. 20, 13—15 2) Theodore

existence! Who can sufficiently tell His praise, who quickens the sinner and abuser who had become dust without motion [so as to participate of] a laudable, recognizing and rational mode of existence; that changes scattered dust into a being exalted above perception; that makes scattered senses a rational nature with quick motion? If the sinner is not able to [understand] His quickening power, he can be content with His grace.

359 Where is Hell which can make us suffer? And what is the torment which can overcome in us His fear, vanquish the joy at His love? And what is Hell as compared with the grace of resurrection, which will restore us to life after Sheol and make this corruptible to be clad with incorruptibility, and make rise in glory what was lying in the contempt of Sheol? Ye understanding, come and wonder. Who has an intellect wise enough to wonder? Come and let us wonder at the grace of our Creator. The retribution of the sinners is this, that He repays them with resurrection instead of with justice. And those that have trampled upon His laws are clad by Him with the glory of perfection instead of with the body. This grace after we had sinned is greater than that which brought our being [1]) into existence when we were not yet.

Glory to Thy immeasurable grace. Now the floods of Thy grace make mé silent without any emotion remaining, not even thankfulness. With what mouth shall we thank Thee, good king who lovest our life? Glory to Thee in both the worlds which Thou hast created for our education and for our delight, from all those that Thou hast brought into existence to know Thy glory, now and at all times, world without end, Amen.

1) ܬܘܩܢܐ

LI

360 ON THE THREE DEGREES OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN THEIR SERVICE AND IMPULSES AND ON THE FAITH OF THE SOUL AND THE TREASURES OF MYSTERIES HIDDEN IN IT AND TO WHAT EXTENT WORLDLY KNOWLEDGE IN ITS MEANS[1]) IS OPPOSED TO THE SIMPLICITY OF FAITH

When the soul in the course of its behaviour walks in the way of faith, this improves it much. When it then turns towards the means of knowledge, it becomes alienated to faith at once. And it is removed from that intelligible force of faith which reveals itself by different acts of help in the serene soul that simply, without inquiry, uses all that belongs to it.

The soul that has once, in faith, entrusted itself unto God and, under many temptations, has received the taste of faith's help, no longer thinks of itself, but is made speechless by ecstasy and silence, nor is it allowed to return unto the means of its knowledge or to make use of them, lest it also be bereft, on the contrary, of the divine care which visits it incessantly and provides for it and clings to it everywhere. For the soul would consider it as a despicable thought to deem itself sufficient to guide itself by the power of its knowledge. For those in whose hearts the light of faith has dawned, do not venture to pray in their own behalf, they do not even venture to ask
361 God: Give us this, or: Take from us that, nor dare they think of themselves in any way. For by the initiated eyes of their faith they always see the paternal care which protects them on the part of that Father whose strong and immeasurable love surpasses the love of all fleshly fathers and who has power to supply us with all things above what we ask and think.

For knowledge is opposed to faith and faith with all its means destroys the laws of knowledge. I do not mean spiritual laws. For the circumscription of the domain of knowledge is

1) ܦܘܪܣܐ

this, that a man is not allowed to do anything without inquiry or examination; but he must investigate, so as to comply, if possible, with what befalls him.

But as to faith, what is it? If yes and no approach unto it equally, faith does not consent to remain in that position. That knowledge cannot be used without methods and means, that it even does not exist without them, is known. And this is the token of its sceptical attitude regarding truth. Faith on the other hand requires a serene and simple mind, far from any cunning or need of means. Behold, how knowledge and faith are each other's opposites.

The mansion of faith is a childlike mind and a pure heart. For in the purity of their heart people have praised God. For 'except ye be converted and become as little children' [1]) and so on. Knowledge, however is the persecutor and opposite of
362 these two. Knowledge adheres to the domain of nature, in all its ways. Faith makes its course above nature. Knowledge does not admit unto itself anything which is in disharmony with nature, not even for the sake of trial; but it lets these things dwell at a distance. Faith on the other hand orders with authority and says: Thou shalt tread upon the serpent and the lion: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet [2]).

Knowledge is accompanied by fear; faith by trust. As long as a man uses the means of knowledge, he is not free from fear, it is not even possible that he be deemed worthy of freedom. But as soon as he clings to faith, at once a free man and the king of his soul and a son of God, he will use freedom in all things, with authority. A man that has found the keys of faith will use all the species in nature, as God. For faith is allowed even to create a new creation, just as God did. If thou willest, anything will stand before thee. And many times it is possible to make every thing out of nothing.

Knowledge is not able to make anything without materials. Knowledge does not venture to step over unto the domain which lies outside nature. How then? That the dissolved nature of water does not suffer the footsteps of flesh on its back, that he who excites fire is burnt by it, and that it is dangerous
363 to act contrary to these [rules]. Such lore is cautiously guarded

1) Matth. 18, 3. 2) Ps. 91, 13.

by knowledge. And it is absolutely impossible to persuade it to order an advance into this domain.

Faith on the other hand commands this with authority, saying: If thou tread on fire it will not burn thee; and floods will not drag thee along. And faith has done these things many times before the eyes of all creatures. If knowledge had been given an opportunity in this domain, it would not have given the permission to try such things at all. Through faith many have entered the mouth of the flames, and have checked the power of the burning fire, and have persevered in it without injury, and have walked on the back of the sea as if it were dry land. Verily, all these things are above nature and contrary to the methods of knowledge.

Seest thou how faith shakes the foundations of knowledge and shows that all its means and laws are vain? Seest thou how knowledge guards the domain of nature? Seest thou also how faith walks above nature and makes there the paths for its course? For nearly five thousand years the means of knowledge have been governing the world and the world has not been able to lift its head from the earth at all nor to perceive the power of its creator, until faith dawned to us and freed us from the trouble of labouring upon earthly things and from the vain slavery of fruitless distraction. And now that we have
364 found an unexplored ocean and an unlimited treasure, should we desire to stay at a poor fountain? There is no knowledge which is not lacking, rich though it may be. As to faith, heaven and earth cannot contain its treasures.

He whose heart is supported by the trust of faith, will never experience want of anything. And though he does not possess anything, he dominates all things through faith. As it is written: All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive [1].

And again: Our Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing [2]. Knowledge perpetually seeks means to preserve those who possess it. What does faith do? 'Except the Lord build the house and keep the city, they labour in vain that build it and wake to watch' [3]. Never will he that seeks refuge with faith use means.

Knowledge everywhere praises fear. As also the sage says: Blessed is he whose heart fears. What does faith do? 'He was

1) Matth. 21, 22 2) Phil. 4, 4 sq. 3) cf. Ps. 127, 1

afraid and began to sink' [1]). And again: For ye have not received the spirit of fear to bondage, but the spirit of adoption [2]) to freedom in faith and trust in God. 'Fear them not therefore' [3]), lest I crush thee before them. Fear always accompanies doubt, and doubt examination, and investigation means, and means knowledge. And that which always examines and investigates, shows doubt and fear; for knowledge does not always and in every thing profit, as has been shown above.

305 Often hard circumstances and multifarious affairs oppose themselves, full of danger and of such a nature that knowledge and the means of wisdom are absolutely unable to give any profit; things which are so hard that they withstand the whole power of the domain of human knowledge.

But faith is never vanquished by anything. What help can human knowledge afford in manifest struggles against invisible natures and incorporeal powers and many things of that kind?

Thou seest how weak the power of knowledge and how strong the power of faith is. Knowledge restrains its pupils from approaching unto anything which can do harm to nature. But look at the power of faith; what does it command its sons? In my name shall they cast out devils and shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them [4]).

Knowledge according to its laws orders all those who walk in its way, to investigate all things from their beginning till their end and then to begin; lest the end of the thing be contrary to the limits of human power, and people might undertake fruitless labour when their work would prove to be impossible and difficult to be realized. But what says faith? All things are possible to him that believeth [5]).

O unspeakable richness, o ocean rich in its billows and in 306 its amazing treasures, o effusions of the power of faith! How full of encouragement, how delightful and full of trust is its path! And how easy are its loads; how delightful is its service. He [6]) that has been deemed worthy of the taste of faith and then turns towards psychic knowledge is equal to him that has found a pearl of great price and changed it for a copper coin for he has left authoritative freedom and has

1) Matth. 14, 30
2) cf. Rom. 8, 15
3) Matth. 10, 26
4) Mark 16, 17
5) Mark 9, 23
6) Introduction

turned towards the means of poverty which are full of the fear of bondship.

Knowledge is not to be rejected, but faith is superior to it. And if we reject, we do not reject knowledge, far be that from us, but the distinctions in a variety of classes in which it moves itself in opposition to the glory of nature, so that it becomes cognate with the class of the demons. This we shall discern distinctly, seeing in how many degrees knowledge moves, and how many distinctions there are in every one of them, and in which emotions it arises within every one of the classes when it remains in them, and in which of these classes it comes into opposition to faith when it is moved in them, and leaves the domain of nature; and which are the distinctions of the service in them, and in which class it comes to its natural state, having changed its pristine direction preparing the degrees for faith by its beautiful behaviour: and to which point the distinctions of this class conduct it; and how it
367 proceeds from this class to a higher one; and what are the kinds of service in that latter class, which is the first in honour; and the point where knowledge is united to faith and becomes one with it and is clad by its influence with fiery impulses so that it blazes spiritually and acquires the wings of apathy and is lifted up from the service of earthly things towards the place of its creation, acquiring also other things.

So it is meet for us to know that the degree of the service of faith is superior to that of knowledge. And knowledge is made perfect by faith, so that it acquires the power to ascend and to perceive that which is above all perceptibility and to behold the splendour of Him that is not attained by the mind or the knowledge of the creatures.

Thus knowledge is the ladder on which a man ascends the height of faith, but which he does not use any more when he has reached faith. For now we know little out of much and we understand little out of much. But when perfection has come this little becomes useless.

So faith shows us as it were before our eyes the reality of that future perfection. By faith we are instructed about those unattainable things, not by investigation and the power of knowledge. All works of righteousness: fasting, alms, vigils, holiness and the others which are performed with the body; and neighbourly love, humility of heart, forgiveness of sins, medi-

tation upon beautiful things, investigation of the mysteries
368 hidden in the holy scriptures, the occupation of the mind with the practice of good works, the keeping of the affections of the soul within the borders, and the other virtues which are accomplished with the soul: all these need knowledge as their regulating power. But all these are still degrees along which the soul ascends unto the elevated height of faith, and they are called virtues.

As to the discipline of faith, its service is above excellence; it is not a service of labour but one of perfect rest; it is consolation and comfort and it is accomplished by the impulses of the soul. All the amazing distinctions of spiritual discipline, the service of which is apperception of spiritual forces and delight and exultation of the soul, and love and joy in God and all the other things which are granted through this discipline — all these are forthwith given by faith in fullness unto the soul which by grace is made worthy of this blessedness, by God who is rich in gifts, as they are mysteriously denoted in the holy scriptures.

But perhaps some one reasons thus: If all these good things and the works of excellence which are mentioned above, and also the refraining from evil and the discrimination of subtle emotions arising in the soul, and the struggle with deliberation and the strife against alluring affections, and the other qualities without which faith cannot even show its power in its working upon the soul — if all these are made perfect by knowledge, how then can it be argued that knowledge is in opposition to faith?

369 The solution of this doubt: There are three stages in which knowledge ascends and descends in an intelligible way, and where it receives its variations according to variations of the places in which it moves, and where it also injures or helps. The three stages which I mean are: body, soul, spirit. And though knowledge is one in its nature, it becomes condensed or subtilized in accordance with its abiding in these intelligible places. And so also its stores are changed and also the working of its impulses.

Hear now the [enumeration of] the stages of its service and the causes by which it injures or helps. Knowledge is a gift which was presented by God unto the species of rational beings from the beginning of their existence. It is simple in

nature, not divided, as sunlight is, but has variations and divisions in connection with its service.

The first stage of knowledge. When knowledge accompanies the love of the body, it gathers provisions as: riches, vain glory, honour, elegant things, bodily comfort, means to guard the body against those things which are in opposition to nature, zeal for rational wisdom that serves to govern this world, and to be the originator of inventions in crafts and learning, and the other things which crown the body in this visible world.

To the properties of this knowledge belong those which have been enumerated above in opposition to faith. This knowledge is what is called simple knowledge, because it is bare
370 of every godly thought. It imparts to the mind an unspeakable weakness because it dominates it with a bridle and because its whole thought is directed upon this world. Thus this degree of knowledge never imagines that there is at all an intelligible force and a hidden governor regarding man, or a divine care which provides for him. But it thinks that all good which happens to a man, and his being saved from injury and guarded against severe difficult accidents and against the numerous adversities which inhere to our nature openly or in secret, all happen by its own zeal and means.

This is the degree of knowledge which thinks in the way mentioned and its adherents say that there is no providential government in visible things. Consequently it is not able to desist from constant anxiety and fear regarding bodily things. Therefore it is accompanied by pusillanimity, grief, despondency, fear of demons, fear of men, rumours of robbers, tales about epidemics anxiety before sicknesses, fear of scarcity of food, fear of death, reptiles and beasts and other things of this kind. And at all times of the day and night knowledge is tossed about as the sea is by its billows, because it does not know to commit its care unto God with the trust of faith in Him.

So knowledge in all its circumstances uses means and artifices. And when by any cause its means are exhausted, because it does not see hidden providence, it scolds men as its
371 hindrances and haters.

By this knowledge was planted the tree of good and evil, which is the eradicator of love. Knowledge examines the small

stains in others and the shortcomings and weak points of men; and in it are the disputations of learning, and dialectics, and cunning artifices, and all the other means which dishonour man. In it are also presumption and haughtiness, because it reckons to its own credit and not to God's credit all things which happen, if they are wholesome.

Faith on the other hand attributes its deeds to grace. Therefore it cannot be haughty. As it is written: I can do all things through grace which strengtheneth me [1]; and again: Not I, but grace which was with me [2]; and what the blessed Apostle says: Knowledge puffeth up [3].

This he says concerning that knowledge which is not mingled with faith and trust in God, but not concerning true knowledge. Far be it! For true knowledge makes perfect by humility the souls of those who possess it, as Moses and David and Isaiah and Peter and Paul and the other saints who were deemed worthy of perfect knowledge, in accordance with the domain of nature. And because their knowledge is constantly enveloped by various visions and divine revelations and the supreme sight of spiritual things and unspeakable mysteries, their own person is in their eyes, as compared with these, dust and ashes.

That other knowledge must needs be puffed up, because it walks in darkness and it examines its subjects in analogy with earthly things without knowing that there is something more valuable.

372 But [even] those who are dominated by haughtiness because their behaviour is [in their own eyes] of greater importance than earthly and bodily things, and because they rely upon service without penetrating with their mind in unattainable things — when they come to meditate upon those waves of the glorious splendour of the godhead, and their service is on high, their mind then cannot deviate to think of impure things and idle deliberations. For those who walk in light cannot go astray. All those, therefore, who err from the light of the knowledge of God's son, and deviate from truth, walk in these ways.

This is the first stage of knowledge accompanying the bodily love. This we reject, calling it oppositional not only to faith, but to all works of excellence.

1) Cf. Philippians 4, 13 2) Cf. 1 Cor. 15, 10 3) 1 Cor. 8, 1

The second degree of knowledge. When knowledge leaves this first state and turns towards meditation and psychic love, it performs those beautiful things which have been described above, through the cooperation of the psychic impulses with the bodily senses, by its natural light; namely: fasting, prayer, compassion, recitation of the holy scriptures with a view to excellence, strife against the affections, and so on. All beautiful deeds and excellent distinctions which are seen in the soul, and the amazing stages which are administered in the church of Christ, are accomplished by the influence of the
373 power of the Holy Ghost, in this middle stage of knowledge. The Ghost will level ways in our heart leading to faith. And by faith we shall gather provisions for this our true world.

And till this point knowledge is still of a bodily nature and composite, though it occupies itself with excellence and though it is the way conducting us to faith. For the latter is a degree higher than knowledge; and if knowledge is as it ought to be, it will be able by the help of Christ, to ascend [this higher way], when it bases its service upon seclusion from men and recitation of the holy scriptures and prayer. And the other good works will be made complete by these.

This is the second degree of knowledge, by which all beautiful works are performed. It is called knowledge of practice, because, as to its outward stage, it accomplishes its activity by deeds perceptible by the senses of the body.

The third degree of knowledge, which is the degree of perfection. How knowledge is subtilized and acquires spirituality so that it resembles the discipline of those invisible forces the service of which is not performed by the apperceptible practice of works but by the thoughts of the intellect — hear this now. When knowledge elevates itself above earthly things and above the thought of service and begins to try its impulses in things hidden from eyesight, and when it partly despises the recollection of [worldly] things from which proceeds the perversion of the affections, and when it stretches itself upwards and clings to faith by thinking of the world to be and love of the promises and investigation con-
374 cerning the hidden things — then faith swallows knowledge, gives anew birth to it, wholly spiritual. Then it is able to direct its flight towards non-bodily places and to the depths of the unscrutable ocean of wonderful and divine government

which directs intelligible and apperceptible beings, and to examine spiritual mysteries which are attained by the simple and by the subtle intellect. Then the inner senses awake to spiritual service, as the order of things which will be in the state of immortality and incorruptibility. For from here onwards they have received intelligible resurrection, symbolically, as a true sign of that universal renewal.

These are the three degrees of knowledge, in which the whole course of man is contained, that of body, soul and spirit. From the time that a man begins to distinguish between good and evil, till he leaves the world, in these three degrees is contained the knowledge of himself and the accomplishment of all iniquity and wickedness and the summit of all righteousness; and the scrutiny of the depths of all spiritual mysteries is worked by one knowledge in these three degrees. Within these is the whole emotion of the mind that ascends or descends moving in good things or in evil things or between these. These three degrees are called by the Fathers the natural, the praeternatural and the supernatural. And these are the three directions in which the thoughts of the rational soul ascend and descend, as it has been said. Either it works righteousness in nature, or in the domain above nature, its thoughts wrapped
375 up in contemplation towards God, or it will go out to feed the swine in the praeternatural domain, as one that has lost the riches of his intellect while serving with the herd of demons.

The first degree of knowledge makes the soul cold to works in the course of the good. The middle one excites in the soul fervour in its course in the degrees of faith. The third stage is the soul's desisting from service; and this is a symbol of the future, that the soul only finds delight in intellectual occupations, in the symbols of future goods. But as nature is not yet elevated above the stage of mortality and above the load of the flesh so as to abide totally in that spiritual state which is exempt from deviation, and because it is not able to administer complete perfection in the world of mortality and to abandon the nature of the flesh completely while it abides in it as yet, therefore it is in the former and in the latter stage alternately. Sometimes the soul in the middle degree of knowledge as a poor being is occupied with performing with all its power the virtues proper to nature, because of the nature of the body. And sometimes, as those who have received the

spirit of adoption [1]), it delights in the mysteries of freedom through the gift of the spirit, even as it pleases its giver. Then it turns again towards the poverty of its world, namely of the body, being on its guard against it, lest the latter should captivate it by the allurements which are found in its world through its troubled and easily deviating impulses. For as long as the soul is covered by the curtain of the flesh, it
376 has no trust. For there is no perfect liberation in a non-perfect world.

The whole service of knowledge is a service of work and of exercise. The deeds of faith however, are not performed by labours; for they are accomplished by the spiritual impulses through the sole and pure efficacy of the soul [and they are elevated] above the senses. Faith is more subtle than knowledge, just as knowledge is more subtle than apperceptible deeds. For all the saints which have been deemed worthy of spiritual discipline which is ecstasy in God, walk through the power of faith, in the delight of that discipline which is above nature.

I do not call this faith, that a man believes in the discrimination of the adorable hypostases of the Essence, or in the properties of His nature, or in the amazing government regarding humanity consisting in His accepting our nature. But I call this faith: the intelligible light which by grace dawns in the soul and, without leaving room for doubt, supports the heart by the testimony of the mind, namely by the persuasion of hope which is far from all presumptions and not by tradition from hearsay. This light will show the spiritual eyes of the soul the hidden mysteries which are in the soul, and the secret riches of divinity which are concealed from the eyes of fleshly men and are revealed spiritually to those who at the table of Christ are brought up in meditation upon His laws; as He says: If ye keep my commandments, I shall send you the Spirit, the Comforter, whom the world cannot receive,
377 and He will guide you into all truth [2]). Thus He will also show man the holy power, which surrounds him at all times. That power is the Comforter. By the power of this faith all the parts of the soul are kindled as it were by fire so that it despises all danger on account of its trust in God.

1) Romans 8, 15 2) John 16, 13

And upon the wings of faith it is lifted up above the circle of the visible world and, as drunk, it is constantly in ecstatic thought of God. And by simple sight, and by insight without sight of the divine nature, it accustoms the intellect to looking at its secret being in meditation. For until the coming of that which is the perfection of the mysteries, and until we shall have been made worthy of its revelation eye to eye, faith administers unspeakable mysteries between God and the saints. May we be deemed worthy of them by the grace of Christ, here by pledge, there in reality in the kingdom of heaven, with all those who love Him. Amen.

LII

SHORT SECTIONS ON A DIFFERENT SUBJECT ON THE DISTINCTION OF THE IMPULSES OF KNOWLEDGE

When knowledge pursues visible things, concerning which instruction is acquired through the senses, it is called natural. When it pursues the intelligible forces behind the visible things in non-bodily species, it is called spiritual. For perception is
378 received by the spirit, not by the senses. And regarding both of these kinds the soul receives the recognizable materials from without. When however knowledge pursues the Essence it is called supernatural, or rather agnostic, because it is elevated above knowledge. As to this [latter kind], the soul does not acquire contemplation concerning it in materials lying without it, as is the case with the former kinds. But without materials, by a sudden working of grace within, unexpectedly, it is revealed in the soul. For the kingdom of God is within us [1]). And it will not come from the place from where it is expected, nor through observation [2]), according to the word of our Lord. But within the hidden form of the intellect it is revealed without cause and without meditation upon it. For the intellect has no materials to meditate upon it.

The first [kind of knowledge] is born from constant recitation and from zeal for teachings. The second kind from a steady

1) cf. Luke 17, 21 2) Luke 17, 20

behaviour and faith of the intellect. The third kind is due to faith alone. For there knowledge ceases and works reach their end and senses will be superfluous.

As long as knowledge is beneath this line, it is called knowledge. And the lower it is, the more honoured it becomes, so that when it reaches the earth and earthly things, knowledge is master of all, and without it all is cripple and idle. But when the soul elevates its gaze and directs the space and the
379 time of its impulses towards heavenly things and becomes desirous after the things which are not to be seen with the bodily eye and over which the flesh has no power, then all things fall under the category of faith.

LIII

ON PRAYER AND THE OTHER THINGS WHICH ARE NECESSARILY TO BE SOUGHT [1]) IN CONSTANT RECOLLECTION AND WHICH IT IS VERY PROFITABLE FOR A MAN TO RECITE WITH DISCRIMINATION AND TO RETAIN

That a man have trust in the petition of his prayer through trust in God, is the chief part of the gift of faith. The assurance of faith in God is not a correct confession, though this is the mother of faith, but a soul that looks on the truth of God by the power of behaviour. When thou findest faith and what is related to it, in the holy scriptures mingled with behaviour, do not consider it in the sense of true confession. Faith which gives the conviction of trust is never demanded by the imperfect, or by those whose mind is perverted so that it cannot attain truth. The assurance of truth reveals itself in the soul — in accordance with the elevation that is the result of behaviour — in an attitude which tends toward the legislation of our Lord.

The light of the soul consists in constant meditation upon the scriptures. For they trace in the intellect profitable recollections with regard to watchfulness against the affections and for perpetual abiding with God, in love and in purity of prayer.

1) Beljan's ܕܬܒܥܝܢ is a misprint for ܡܬܒܥܝܢ

They trace before us the way which is made peaceful by
380 the steps of the saints. Yet do not confide in the signs of the words when they are not accompanied by great alertness and perpetual affectability through constant prayers. Accept without doubt words that are spoken from experience, even if they are uttered by a simple man. Even the great treasury of earthly kings does not abhor to take increase from the money of the mendicant. And from small sources the large streams of the rivers increase.

If the recollection of the excellent renews in us the desire of excellence when we commune with them mentally, the recollection of the impudent also renews in our mind impure desire when we are reminded of them. This is because the recollection of all these develops in our mind the distinct lines of their deeds. And with their finger as it were they show us their evil deeds or the elevation of their behaviour, in accord with their belonging to one or to the other kind. And the recollection with its stings — be they right or left ones — spurns us to meditate upon the baseness of our mind (while the images of their noble behaviour are depicted in our imaginations) and to look upon them zealously.

So not only the meditation upon evil injures those who are captured by it, but also the sight and the recollection of those who perform evil. And not only is the performing of excellent things greatly profitable to those who accomplish them, but also the imaginative representation formed by the recollection of the persons who perform those things. And on account of
381 this it can be understood that those who are near to reaching the stage of purity, are deemed worthy of seeing perpetually holy men in nightly visions. And during the whole day the images of the saints which are printed in their soul are to them a source of joy by their intellectual intercourse with them. And on account of this they turn with renewed fervour towards the performance of good works and an intense fire of love unto excellence is kindled in them.

It is said that the holy angels assume the appearance of honoured and excellent men and show themselves to the soul in visions during sleep when the emotions are distracted, for the sake of joy and higher incitement. And during the day they set [the solitary] astir by the recollection of the visions, and so they are fired anew to their labour by their joy at

those holy men. And so the latter are promotors of the former's course. In the same way, at the time of the heat of battle, those who are accustomed to evil intercourse, are visited by the demons in this likeness. They assume a likeness in which they show themselves to the soul, namely visions highly exciting amidst the recollections of the day to those who converse with these. Sometimes also they do this by frightful visions which terrify the soul and weaken it, and which accentuate the difficulty of behaviour in solitude and reclusion, and the like.

We ought therefore, o my brethren, to use discrimination regarding recollections, in our meditation, [choosing] which of them we should cherish and which we should dispel hastily as soon as they approach our mind, according to whether they
382 proceed from the activity of the demons who provide the affections with matter, or from desire or anger, or from the holy angels such as give indications that cause joy and knowledge and profit by the deliberations which they excite through their offerings to us, or by the recollection and perception of former deeds some of which stir in the soul deliberations that are useful in any direction.

Experience concerning the two we must acquire by discriminating knowledge, as also experience concerning their aspect, their intercourse, even concerning their way of working. Each of the two has at once to be met with a distinct prayer.

Love which is maintained by [outward] things is to be compared with a small flame whose light subsists by the sustenance of oil; and with a stream subsisting through rain, and whose flow ceases as soon as the supply which maintains it becomes deficient. Love of which God is the cause, is as a source welling from the depth, whose current will never cease. For He alone is the source of love whose supply does not fail.

Thou desirest to perform the recitation of Psalms during thy service with delight, and thou wishest to perceive the spiritual words which thou recitest? Abandon the performance of a certain quantity and ignore the measures of service; and say the words in the way of prayer, and leave the usual iteration. Understand what I say. As to those sections which bear the character of a history, let thy spirit consider their repetition as the recitation of some providential act of God, in order that by the deep significance which is in them the soul be
383 awakened unto amazement at Providence; and from here it

may be stirred to praises or to profitable affection. The passages which are prayers, take them unto thyself. When thy mind has become established in them, confusion has given way and disappeared. For in the service of bondage there is no peace of mind, nor is there trouble of confusion in the liberty of the children. For confusion is wont to suck away the taste of insights and to rob them of their intellect, as the leech which with the blood of the limbs sucks the vitality of the body. For it is possible, to say of confusion that it is the mount of Satan even. Satan, as a chariot-driver, is wont to ride on it constantly, taking with him a multitude of affections. Thus he invades the poor soul making use of the darkness of its confusion.

And this thou hast to understand clearly, lest in the sentences of thy recited Psalms and of thy prayer thou becomest a conductor of words as if they came from a strange person. For thou shouldst not think that thou art sedulously promoting the work of the apostles if thou art wholly devoid of the passion and the joy which is in it. But thou shouldst say the words beseechingly, as originating in thyself, with intelligence and with passionate discrimination, as one who is aware of his being occupied with ritual of his own. Dejection is caused by distraction of mind; distraction by neglect of labours and recitation and by intercourse left to chance.

Not to use conversation with those who speak to us, but
384 to cut off their speech entreatingly, is a sign of a mind that has found wisdom and power by grace. For its true knowledge frees it from much labour; and by its treading short ways it cuts off the many windings of a long way. For we have not at all times the power to reduce to silence all contrary deliberations by arguments, and it may happen, when we receive a blow, that for a long time we shall not be healed.

Against those who are six thousand years old thou wilt stand thy trial. But they also are provided with means which may destroy thee, being mightier than thy wisdom and thy learning. But even if thou vanquishest, the dirt of their deliberations will defile thy mind and their stinking odour will linger in thy smell. But by the former method [1] thou wilt be free from all these and from fear, because there is no helper like God.

1) viz. by cutting off discussions

Perpetual tears during prayer are a sign of divine mercy of which the soul is worthy because of its repentance which has been accepted; and with tears it begins to enter the plain of serenity. Unless the deliberations have been freed from the care of transitory things and have cast away the hope of the world and contempt for it has been established in them and they have begun to prepare provisions for the day of a man's departure, because the thought of things beyond earthly ones has been established [1]) in the soul — it is not possible that the eyes shed
385 tears. Tears originate from pure meditation without distraction and from perpetual meditations without deviation, and by some subtle recollection which falls into the mind and affects the heart by the anxiety it causes. Then tears become frequent.

When thou turnest towards perpetual handiwork in thy solitude, do not make the commandment of the fathers a pretext for love of money. In order to avoid despondency thou must have some trifling occupation which does not trouble the mind. If however thou desirest to bestow more care upon it, for the sake of alms, know then that the order of prayer is more excellent than alms; if thou desirest to do so because of thy need, without being covetous, that which is sufficient to fulfill thy want is what our Lord provides thee with. He never has left His servants in want of transitory things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, before ye ask, says our Lord [2]).

One of the saints [3]) has said: it is not the aim of thy discipline that thou shouldst appease the hungry and that thy cell chould become a place of congregation for strangers. For this behaviour is rather meet for those who are in the world, but nor for solitaries who are free from thoughts of visible things and who preserve their mind by prayer. If ever thou wilt be deemed worthy of the solitary state and avoid heavy
386 loads in the kingdom of its freedom, let not the customary thought of fear terrify thee with its many and varying deliberations. But as a man who believes that there is a guardian with him and who knows occurately through his wisdom that he and all creatures are under one Lord, and that one will moves them all and stops and governs them, and that no fellow is able to injure his comrade without the commandment

1) Reading ܒܕܕܠܐ 2) Matthew 6, 33
3) Perhaps Enagrius; cf. *Book of the Dove*, p. 30

of the Governor, and that all is under His care — make up thy mind to be courageous. For though some of them have been given freedom, yet they have no freedom in all things, and neither the demons nor the beasts of prey, nor malicious men are able to injure any man according to their good pleasure, until the divine will has given the command and until material opportunity has been given. It is not granted by the divine will that all freedom should realize itself, otherwise no flesh could live. For the Lord does not allow the freedom of demons or man to approach his creatures that they use it according to their good pleasure.

So thou hast to say to thyself: there is a guardian with me and there is no possibility for any of the creatures even to show themselves to me, if no permission from on high has been given. So if thou seest with thy eyes and hearest with thy ears their threatenings, even then thou must not believe that they will venture to act. If they had received an order
387 from the heavenly will, no speech and even not a word even would be necessary, but action would immediately follow will. And if this be the will of my Lord (so say to thyself), that the evil ones have power in his creation, then I must not resist this fact as if I were one taking pleasure in contradicting the will of his Lord. Thus, even in thy temptations, thou shalt be full of gladness, as one who knows and feels that his Lord is governor. Support therefore thy heart by confidence in the faith in the Lord without being afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow that flies by day[1]). For the faith of the righteous in God makes the beasts of the field as lambs and goats[2]). It is namely impossible to be a righteous man confiding in God unless this be true of thee, that for the sake of the service of righteousness thou art gone into the desert with its many troubles and that for it thou art administering the will of God. So thou labourest in vain when thou takest upon thee these pains. For God does not wish the pains of mankind, but that thou offer to Him as a sacrifice of love thy personal affections. All those who love God show Him this distinctive [sign of love] that they are willing to bear troubles for the sake of His love. For all those who desire to live in the fear of God through Jesus Christ, bear troubles. And then He makes them rule over his hidden treasures.

1) Psalm 91, 5 2) Cf. *Book of the Three*, p. 80

One of the saints has said: There was an old, honoured solitary to whom I once went when I was shaken by tempta-
388 tions. He was ill and had to lie down. When I had greeted him I sat down near him and said: Pray for me, Father, for I am very much shaken by the temptations of the demons. He opened his eyes and looked at me benignanthy, saying. My son, thou art a boy; God will not admit the demons unto thee. I answered: If I am a boy I have to bear the temptations of strong men. Then he said to me: So God is trying to make thee wise. I said to him: How can I become wise, if I taste death every day? He said to me: God loves thee; be silent, God shall give thee His gift. Then he said to me: Thou must know, my son, that I have been making war upon the demons during thirty years, of which I have passed twenty without enjoying any help whatever. When twenty five years had elapsed, rest began to show itself. As it approached, it increased and when twenty eight years had passed it had grown considerably. And now that thirty years have been accomplished rest has increased to such a degree, that I know not how this can happen. — Further he said: When I desire to stand performing service, I am allowed to accomplish one *marmita*[1]). Further, even if I remain standing during three days, I am in ecstasy with God, without perceiving fatigue. — Behold how prolonged labours produce illimitable rest.

One of the Fathers used to eat two times every week. He
389 said to us: 'The day on which I speak with someone, I am not able to keep the usual rule of fasting, but I am compelled to break it'. So we understand that the keeping of the tongue not only does excite the mind unto God but that it also in secret grants considerable force for the accomplishment of the visible labours which are performed through the body. And on account of a hidden service the intellect will constantly be illuminated, as our Fathers say. For keeping the tongue excites the heart unto God, if we be silent with knowledge.

This saint was much given to vigils saying: When of a night I stand till dawn and take rest after the recitation of Psalms, and then wake up from sleep, on that day I am as a man who is not in this world. No single earthly thought

1) a fifteenth part of the psalter.

rises in my heart, nor do I want definite regulations, but all day I am in ecstasy.

On one day such as this in which I was wont to take food (and since four days I had not eaten), when I rose in order to perform the evening service and to eat afterwards, I stood in the room of my cell in full sunlight. I perceived only that I began with the *marmita* which is the beginning of the service; but till the next day when the sun rose before me and the clothes on my body became warm, I did not perceive where I was. As the sun troubled me by burning my face my mind came back to me and behold, I saw that it was a
390 new day. And I thanked God because of His pouring out His grace upon mankind and because of His deeming worthy of such a greatness those who seek Him.

Here end the tales of holy men.

LIV

OTHER EXPLANATIONS CONCERNING MAGGENANUTHA [1]

Although we have already spoken on this subject in an other context in the foregoing disquisitions [2]), when an opportunity offered itself, yet we do not object to elucidating the subject further here.

Maggenanutha denotes help and guardianship and also the receiving of the heavenly gift. As for instance: The Holy Ghost shall come and the Power of the Highest shall overshadow thee [3]). And: Thy right hand shall save me [4]), which is a prayer for help. And: I will defend this city to save it [5]).

So we understand two kinds of action in the maggenanutha granted by God unto mankind one is symbolical and intelligible; the other practical. The former is connected with the holiness which is received through divine grace; this means: by the influence of the Holy Ghost a man is made holy in body and soul, as is the case of Elisha and John and Mary the blessed among women. But because this is incomparable

1) Inspiration, revelation, incarnation a. s. o. 2) Syriac text, pp. 107, 160

3) Luke 1, 35 *maggen*; to overshadow is only a faint rendering. The original means rather to envelop and to overpower.

4) Ps. 138, 7 5) Is. 37, 35

and above that which happens to the rank-and-file of creatures we have to come to that partial [holiness] which is granted unto the other saints, in the relation between the limbs and the body.

The mysterious kind of maggenanutha — as the [gifts] 391 imparted unto each of the saints — is a kind of influence which possesses the mind. And when man is deemed worthy of this maggenanutha, the mind is snatched away in ecstasy and expanded by some divine revelation. And as long as the influence possesses the mind, man is exalted above the emotions of psychic deliberations, on account of his communion with the Holy Ghost.

And this is what was said by the Apostle in the form of a prayer unto the Ephesians, when he desired to explain to them this mystery: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your hearts being enlightened [1]). What is the result of this? That ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe [2]).

This is one symbolical kind of maggenanutha, that when this power overshadows a man, he is deemed worthy of the glory of the new world, by revelation. And this is the part that has fallen to the lot of the saints by light; concerning which the blessed Paul says, that those are deemed worthy of it who have received sanctification of the mind from the Spirit, on account of their holy and excellent behaviour [3]).

Another kind of maggenanutha is that whose action manifests itself practically. It is the intelligible power which constantly covers a man and broods over him, removing from him any injury or accident that threatens to approach his body or soul, something not to be perceived visibly by the mind, but 392 clear and evident to the eye of faith, such as was frequently experienced by the saints; as is written: The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear Him and deliver them [4]). And: Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers them out of them all [5]).

1) Ephesians 1, 17 sq. 2) ib. 1:8, 18 sq. 3) cf. 2 Thess. 2, 13
4) Ps. 34, 7 5) Ps. 34, 19

LV

HOW THE HIDDEN ALERTNESS WITHIN THE SOUL IS TO BE PRESERVED HOW SLEEPINESS AND COLDNESS ENTER THE MIND BANISHING THE HOLY FERVOUR FROM THE SOUL KILLING THE DESIRE OF GOD THAT TENDS TOWARDS SPIRITUAL AND HEAVENLY DESIRABLE THINGS

Opposition would have no chance to cause confusion to those who desire beautiful things, if an occasion were not offered to these evil machinations by the lovers of beautiful things themselves. The matter is nearly thus.

Every impulse of love unto what is beautiful is from the beginning of its motion accompanied by some zeal which in its fervour resembles that of fiery coals. This zeal usually surrounds the impulse of love as a wall, chasing from its neighbourhood all opposition and trouble. It possesses such vigour and unspeakable force that it can stiffen the whole soul against relaxation or against being shaken by the attack of all troublous things. It is in the first place the force of the holy desire implanted in the nature of the soul, namely an emotion set astir
393 by the force of the soul's natural anger, which is implanted in it by God in order to guard the boundaries of nature, so that it may use its vigour for fulfilling the natural desire of the soul, which is excellence. It is impossible to perform excellence without this impulse.

It is called zeal because it makes zealous and it sets astir and kindles and makes man heroic from time to time so that he despises the body in the troubles and terrible temptations which occur, and delivers his soul to death full of confidence and encounters the powers of the rebellion, giving up especially the fulfilling of what the soul loves.

A certain man, clad with Christ, somewhere in his book calls this zeal a dog and a guardian of the law of God, which is excellence.

Excellence is the fulfilling of the laws of God. This force of zeal becomes mighty and alert and fervent for the sake of guarding the house, an account of two reasons; and it becomes

weak and sleepy and despicable on account of other two reasons.

The first reason of fervour and alertness consists in anxiety for the virtues which a man possesses or is going to possess, when some fear arises, lest these virtues should be stolen or seized by some approaching event. This fear is set astir by divine care, in all worshipers of excellence, lest the alertness and the constant zeal of the soul should get asleep.

When this fear is set astir in nature, the dog of which we
394 have spoken will be fervent, night and day, as a blazing furnace, spurring nature which like a Cherub is watching and threatening all the surroundings at all times. If, so to speak, a bird should pass by, it would be astir and bark with a vigour unspeakably sharp.

When this fear is anxious on behalf of the body, it is satanic; because faith in God's care is shaken and man forgets how God thinks of those who care for excellence by caring for them at all times. As the Holy Ghost has said through the mouth of the prophet: The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are [inclined] to hear them [1]). For the thoughts of the Lord are unto those who fear Him. And in another place [the prophet] says, as it were speaking in the name of God, unto those who perform righteousness: There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee; they shall bear thee up in their hands [2]), and compare the other words of Scripture.

But when this fear is on behalf of the soul, for the accidents threatening excellence, namely fear lest the soul be robbed or injured by any cause, this is a divine impulse and an excellent thought. And it is in God's care that this distress and fear originate, and this terror which torments the mind by its oppression.

The second cause of the vigour and the fervour of the dog is brought about by the increase of love of excellence in the soul. According to the measure of the love of the soul for
395 that which it possesses by this love, — which is a divine deliberation — this natural zeal glows for it.

As to the causes of its abating and sleepiness, one of them is brought about by love being quenched and reduced in the

1) Psalms 34, 16 2) Psalms 91, 11 sq.

soul. The second rises when some deliberation of trust takes its seat in the soul and man confides and thinks many times that there is no danger of anything that could injure him. Then he casts away the weapon of zeal and becomes as a house without a guardian. And the dog goes asleep, leaving his watch. Usually this deliberation is the source of most of the intelligible houses being robbed. This happens when the serene flame of holy knowledge in the soul becomes dark.

Whereby does it become dark, if not by some subtle deliberation of presumption penetrating into the soul, or because man is given to too much care of bodily things, or because he is frequently in contact with worldly things. Every time that strugglers come into contact with lay people, especially women, the soul descends. This also happens through contact with the multitude on account of whose gaze the soul necessarily is assailed by vain glory.

In short: the ruling mind as often as it comes into contact with the world resembles the skipper who calmly was sailing on the sea while a soft wind from behind drove him towards the harbour, when he suddenly got among the cliffs.

LVI

596 BEAUTIFUL CONSIDERATIONS [1]) CONCERNING THE LIFE OF MAN

As often as man in his course approaches this world, the love of worldly things takes root in him, and he is constantly troubled by the thought of them, and he fights with man for them; and becomes bound in love to some person or other, without discrimination.

When on the other hand the mind profits by the subtle meditation upon the world to be, constantly thoughts unrivalled will move in it; and expecting the things which he does not see, he goes to meet them, forgetting the things of this world, sometimes forgetting himself, because of his utter absorption in ideas, neglecting visible things on account of these deliberations. So deliberations as well as practice are despised by

1) literally: distinctions

him as long as he cares for these ideas. He is devoid of enslaving love related to single persons, but universal love which does not need sight is fixed in his soul. The apperception of recollection concerning human things gradually disappears from his mind, while the thought of hidden things increases in it, gains force and vanquishes bodily deliberations, till it is free from corruptible things, as far as nature allows this. And if it were not that the common [human] recollection was aroused in him, when the need of something which cannot absolutely be dispensed with presents itself, his mind would be directed towards future things the most of the time, by such thoughts as would give him profit of these things. And because of these he becomes a stranger [1]) to all the wisdom of this world. So he becomes void of recollection and a fool as it were on account of his having examined human wisdom.

397 Blessed is the man who has been deemed worthy of these things. Tears will not cease to drop from his eyes when he turns unto himself with the recollection of those things by which men are led into error, and why forgiveness is granted them, and whereby the universal end is brought about, and what labour and error is caused by these. It is said concerning Paul that on account of these emotions which prevailed over his soul, for three years he was not quit of tears, unable to subdue them.

Such a deliberation accompanied with the emotion of tears rules man when he perceives the future hope and then turns his mind towards the things of this world, [thinking] how small psychic life is in comparison with the hope preserved for eternities, in the new life. By such affectability man grows dead unto all transitory things and thought of them; and all affections of body and soul die in him.

Let us remember this, my beloved, and despise the things of this world, as much as it is possible for us; and let us gradually, to the same extent, approach with our emotions towards future things. For if a man does not compel himself, from time to time utterly neglecting the things which are before the eyes in order to abandon them gradually and to proceed onwards in this way, so that the thought and the contemplation of these things increase in him — he will remain

1) literally: a fool

in this body with his behaviour. Also those who walk in the way, if they do not go forwards in their daily march and so diminish the distance but remain on one spot, the way before
398 them will never end and they will never arrive there where they hope to come.

Our case resembles theirs. If we do not compel ourselves gradually, we never shall have the power to abandon the bodily things in order to look towards God.

Because it is so difficult to free oneself from them when one has once become entangled in any of them, it is a matter of wisdom to struggle in order not to come near to them, so that one may be free even of the thought of them, and thus the mind be able to look towards something different. I do not mean that we should not provide for our wants; for these are a necessity and may bereave nature of life. But we should not put them in the position of the principal service by giving them the preference over the service of God. But attending to these needs in part, we must leave the care of them to God. We should confide in Him rather than in ourselves.

And when a man ventures to despise these [earthly] things wholly for the sake of spiritual things, I do not esteem this improper, because we have all the encouragements of scripture that teaches us to be strong in hope; as is written: The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing [1]). And David says: Cast thy care upon the Lord and He shall sustain thee [2]). The rich do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing [3]). And our Lord has commanded us, saying: Be careful for nothing, but frequently think of the future things. And these earthly things which are necessary because of the needs of nature, will not fail thee.

399 May God in His grace grant us that His love be abundant in us, in order that by constant meditation on Him we may forget the world and what belongs to it by becoming free from its bonds; and that instead of many bonds we may be bound with that one bond which is not loosened from those who love Him, namely the bond of the kingdom of the worlds above; that we also may be bound with it, and be deemed worthy of the prefiguration of good the fulness of which is preserved in the future world for those who have possessed

1) Philippians 4, 5 2) Psalms 55, 22 3) Ps. 34, 10 according to the Peshita

it here already. That we also may possess it and be possessed by it through the power that comes from it, for ever and ever, Amen.

LVII

HOW PATIENCE FOR THE SAKE OF THE LOVE OF GOD ACQUIRES HELP FROM GOD

In accordance with a man's despising this world and his being occupied by the fear of God, divine care will approach him and he will perceive its help in secret and there will be given to him clear emotions so as to understand it. Even though a man be not destitute of the goods of this world by his own will, still even as he is devoid of them, so mercy will follow him and divine compassion will support him. Glory to Him who shows us His grace in things of the right and of the left hand [1]) and who in all of them lays a cause for the renewal of our life; and who makes the souls of those who, wilfully, are too weak to acquire life, ascend towards excellence, by involuntary distress.

400 The poor Lazarus was not destitute of the goods of this world by his own will, even his body was stricken by ulcers; bitter plagues he had to endure, one still harder than the other: illness and poverty. Yet in the end he received honour in the bosom of the patriarch.

God is near to the suffering heart which out of trouble cries to Him. And though the body sometimes refuses to bear these pains for the sake of the help, yet, as a physician who causes healing by the acute pains of his operations, the Lord greatly favours his soul in accordance with the heavy pains of his distress. Now when the love of Christ is not so prevalent in thee that thou art without affection in all troubles through thy gladness in Him, know then that the world lives in thee more than Christ does. When illnesses and want, or injury of the body, or fear of its afflictions trouble thy mind in the joy of thy hope and thy clear thought in our Lord, know then that the body lives in thee, not Christ. He whose

1) happy and unhappy

love is prevalent over thee, he lives in thee. If thou art able to walk in serenity on thy way unto Christ, fulfilling all things required without lack, without bodily torments, without fear of adversaries, know then that thou art sick in thy mind and devoid of the taste of God's glory.

I do not judge why thou art so, but [I say this] in order that thou mayest know at least how far thou art from the
401 accomplishment, even partially, of the discipline of the saints which lived before us. Do not say: There is not a man to be found whose mind, shipwrecked though the body may be by every sorrow of temptation, is so wholly exalted above sickness that the love of Christ vanquished the affectability of the mind. I refrain from reminding thee of the deeds of the martyrs; perhaps we would be unable to remain standing firm before the deluge of their sufferings, in which patience through the power of love has vanquished the trouble and the love of the body. But because even the recollection of these things is difficult to human nature, in that we are troubled by the greatness of the thing and by its amazing aspect, we will turn towards the ungodly philosophers, and from them, by a comparison with their patience, we shall find instruction concerning the weakness of our will. But this has also to be preserved till its time when we shall explain it in its place [1]), knowing that also this is a sign of illness. Thus we shall not judge this matter from ourselves, but so that we may believe how very low we have been cast down and how that, despite this, it is possible that the Highest should become wholly man. The drunkard will never believe that there are many men who do not even drink wine. Neither will the lascivious believe, that there are men who wholly abstain from sexual union. Neither will he that is troubled by a certain desire believe that there are men who are not troubled at all by this desire, even though they be incited by other things. Neither will he that is constantly ill, believe that there exists a body which is not ruined by illnesses. So the consolation
402 of those who are not able to vanquish absolutely [the weakness of] the mind, may be in the consideration that there is no man who is completely elevated above this weakness. That there are people in whom the love of Christ has vanquished

1) p. 403 (Syriac text)

the weakness of nature so that they wholly despise the body and its love, whose mind is not troubled by the gladness in Christ so that this should bring about the possibility of being vanquished by the power of oppositional forces on the part of the body, and in whom the [divine] gifts have overcome the incompetence of nature — this they do not believe at all.

I do not say that difficulties wholly fail in the way of God, or that there is anyone who lives in this way without temptations. On the contrary, I say that he that lives in excellence, day by day will find more troubles, and the farther he proceeds onwards, the more he is oppressed by distresses. This is a sign of the veraciousness of his course, that he lives a bitter life in this world and that he departs this body with torments. For this world is not the world of the righteous, and they cannot abide in it without distresses. But the will can be strengthened by grace to despise all these things and keep the mind without confusion, by the gladness of the love of Christ.

That there have been men who reached this, and that it is possible that they become thus even now, is due to the great help of the gift of Christ. Do not judge, o man, the
403 deeds of all men, from thy own case, and do not weigh their behaviour against the weight of thy own weakness. If thou seekest, begin with hope, then thou wilt be helped. And be not incredulous lest thou be left by Him that sows these things in thee, so that thou reach the measure of thine own smallness, whatever it be, in contrast to those who have vanquished the world and its confusion absolutely.

If thou doest not believe the church, approach unto the philosophers. Then thou wilt see, how much power the will possesses to be uplifted above the body and to remain without confusion according to the choice of him that chooses. When thou seest how these, who did not know God, have displayed in the face of the world the endurance and vigour of a heroic will, and how they have shown how much force inner nature possesses to vanquish everything if it like — a man will be struck with amazement in reading their histories at the power which God has assembled in this nature, that, if we like, we can vanquish everything. But because we do not will, we preach the weakness of nature. And while we hide the vigour of nature by the weakness of our will, we say: Who should ever be able to vanquish these things?

One of them had mastered the will of the body to such a degree, that, in order not to give up and to deviate from the choice he had made, he did not even allow his mind to be disturbed when the sword was drawn; so fear of death could not break through the barrier he had made for himself. When
404 for many years he had kept silence, the king of the Greeks, wondering at his fame and desiring to put him to the test, ordered him to appear before him. As the philosopher remained silent whenever the king spoke and questioned him, giving no answer, the king grew angry and ordered him to be put to death, because he was not even impressed by the glory of his throne and crown. The philosopher was not moved by this [order], but kept his rule quietly. Then the king ordered the executioners to slay him if he should break his rule out of fear of the sword; but to bring him back living if he should be firm of will. When the moment had come and the executioners commanded him to bend his will or die, he deliberated thus: it is better once to suffer death, while keeping the rule of my will which I have borne all this time, than to give way out of fear of death, putting to shame my wisdom, and be found a coward because of that which I shall have to meet at any rate, whenever it be. — By this firmness of will and this heroic mind he was delivered even from death, being found just and true to his rule. Doest thou see what power will possesses? This sage stretched his neck before the sword without breaking his own rule.

Others have trampled upon the desire of nature and have tamed it by the bridle which they have put into its mouth. Others have remained unmoved before disdain. Others have
405 been found consistent and without wrath, before blows. Some have suffered from their equals what could hardly be borne; others from people who were by far their inferiors. Others have remained without feelings of enmity or anger while their possessions were robbed. Others have shown endurance under horrible and severe illnesses, without being troubled, and have added even other ascetic practices. Some have performed voluntary labours, others have practised total nakedness, apart from the covering demanded by chastity, or a solitary life, and support of life by raw food. Thus king Alexander, when once he went to see one of them, did not hear anything from him except on contempt of the world.

All this [they practised] lest they should be withheld from meditation and the occupying themselves with their wisdom.

If the labour of instruction and the discipline of wisdom, apart from the fear of God and the light of faith and the hope of a world to be, are able to perform such heroic deeds, who then should not be despised by his own conscience, that notwithstanding all the light of Christ which is poured out on the world, and the great gifts which are lavished abundantly in secret, and the hope on God which day by day is confirmed by events — still the difficulties and the pleasure of this body are master of him, so that he does not remain as a diamond for the sake of the love of God, despising everything joyfully?

If it is possible to be in doubt as to how men vanquish all
406 these things — every wise man knows that no one can do anything by his own power. But it is possible, because by God's help and a firm will he finds all things weaker than himself.

By these the zeal of the solitaries has been kindled, so that they have abandoned and suddenly given up the world and what belongs to it, and have become strong, withstanding all contrary things and, by endurance of will and by the help of their Lord, have vanquished all difficulties whatsoever. For they dwelt in the midst of them. Many of them were adherents of the doctrine of the philosophers, saying: If external sages, in spite of the fact that they were not on the way of God, have taken upon themselves, in return for transitory wisdom and training in the instruction of this temporary world, to bear these things, and have become alienated to the world and apart from it in their dealings, so as to reach the desire of their will, though there was no just basis in their thoughts nor hope of immortality in their labours, performing these things to this high degree with a view to a vain expectation — how much more are we bound to endure for the sake of the love of God and to despise all difficulties for the sake of the sublime future which has been promised us.

So they have been confirmed by this thought and have mastered the laxity of their deliberations and have entered the arena and turned not their backs until they have gained the crown. They were an example even for later generations, and have shown the world how those who walk this way have to enter the arena.

LVIII

407 ON THOSE WHO LIVE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF GOD AND PASS ALL THEIR DAYS IN A LIFE OF KNOWLEDGE

Blessed is he that leads a watchful life in this world. A certain Father had written on all the walls of his cell various things, and all kinds of thoughts, and admirable words on every context. He was asked: What are these, o Father? He answered: These are deliberations of justice that occur to me through the angel that is with me and through the right impulses of nature. I write them down when I am in these apartments, in order that I may be occupied with them in the time of darkness, and that they may save me from error.

So a man ought to do all his days.

A certain Father was called happy by his own thoughts which praised him thus: In stead of the world that passes, thou hast been deemed worthy of the indestructible hope. The Father said to them: Why do ye call me happy, while I am still alive? I do not know what will happen to me till my death. I am still on the way; happiness is not certain before I have reached my home.

Indeed, this is a just deliberation. It is becoming that we should appoint our day of death as the term of victory. Before death, he that triumphs is no real victor. For his enemies are living and the way is before him, and he does not know
408 where he may be entangled; for his way is not safe, and he has not yet reached the time of trust. Thus he that is entangled in evil things has not to be dejected; for it is possible for him to gain life, as he is still alive. There is hope for him as well as for the one that behaves well. Why doest thou rebuke the sinner, o man? The labours of thine own merchandise have not yet entered the harbour; the hope of him over whom thou art extolling thyself, has not been cut off by God. It is possible that within a short time he will surpass thee in excellence and come nearer to God than thou art. For death has not yet come and concluded his affair, nor thine. Many vicissitudes happen to a man during

his life. But it is God who looks to the end and not to the things in the middle. There have been many righteous who fell from their righteousness, and sinners have come up and taken their place. Therefore the righteous should not extol himself, he is still alive; nor shall the sinner be dejected, for God is near to him if he seeks Him, and prepared to receive him when he changes his behaviour and turns towards Him. If thou hast wrought righteousness without perceiving the taste of its profit, then be not amazed.

Until a man becomes humble, he does not receive the wages of his service. Remuneration is not given for service, but for humbleness. He that wrongs the latter, looses the former.

He who has taken upon him the service of excellence is
409 inferior to him that has first taken upon him the excellence of service. Excellence is the mother of afflictions; from afflictions humbleness is born. The gift is given for humbleness. Consequently remuneration does not belong to excellence, nor to pains for its sake, but to humbleness which is born from it. Now if humbleness fails, the other ones are vain. The service of excellence is the observance of the commandments of our Lord. The excellence of service is steadiness of mind, which is established by humbleness and watchfulness. Where the power [necessary] for the performance of the former ones fails, the latter is received instead of them. So Christ does not seek the service of the commandments, but the steadiness of the soul, for the sake of which He also has laid commandments upon rational beings. The body works with the right and with the left part, equally. But the mind, as is becoming, is either justified or condemned.

Some serve life by left-hand things, through wisdom from God; and some acquire sin under the appearance of acquiring divine things. Shortcomings in sundry things in which those who are watchful are entangled, are permitted by God in order to guard their righteousness, that their trespasses and failures may become to them a cause of humbleness.

Humbleness protects many men for their service, not only withholding them from haughtiness, but by the recollection their [trespasses] they become humble and receive higher wages.

Without blows a gift cannot be kept. A gift without temp-
410 tations is found to cause the destruction of those who have received it.

If thou hast served well before God, and He has given thee a gift for thy steadfastness regarding Him, in order to spur thee on the more and to give thee joy in thy service, then let Him give thee knowledge so as to know how it is necessary to humble thyself; otherwise he would appoint a prosecutor or take it again from thee, lest there should be a chance for its being lost. It is not given to every one to guard riches without damage.

The soul that takes upon itself the trouble of excellence and lives in the veracious fear of God cannot be without daily afflictions. Virtues and afflictions are interwoven.

He who abandons troubles also abandons excellence entirely. Who clings to excellency, clings to afflictions. If thou desirest excellence, thou givest thyself over to all afflictions. Excellence is the mother of afflictions; afflictions are the mother of humbleness. For God does not desire that the soul should be without care. And he that desires this, his mind is found to be without God's will. By care I do not mean care concerning bodily things, but concerning the oppression that persecutes virtues. For before we reach true knowledge, which is the revelation of hidden things, we have to come near to humbleness through temptations. He that is found to be without afflictions in his excellence, for him a door unto haughtiness is opened. How can he who desires this [excellence] be without affliction in his mind? It is not possible that the mind remain
611 in humbleness if there is no reason for blows. And it is not possible that without humbleness it should remain in perpetual supplication unto God, in serenity.

First man is removed from the thought of his duty in his mind, then the spirit of haughtiness approaches him. At first the angel of care suffers this, but afterwards it withdraws itself from him. As long as the angel is near him, he provides him solely with thoughts of righteousness. But when he has wronged the angel and it has withdrawn itself from him, then a foreign power approaches him, and no single just thought will furthermore be in him. Haughtiness comes before ruin, says the sage [1]; so humbleness before a gift. By the quantity of haughtiness which is found in the soul, is judged the scale of ruin which is on the point of being sent to it by God.

1) Proverbs 16, 19

For none of the sins does God withdraw from man, leaving him wholly because He dislikes him, until He finds the mind seized with haughtiness or blasphemy. And the former [of these two] becomes the cause of the latter.

Those who in their mind leave the way of humbleness and so become devoid of divine help, either fall into the impurity of lasciviousness, or into blasphemy, or into mental ruin.

Those who extol themselves on account of excellent behaviour, usually fall into into evil lasciviousness; those who extol themselves on account of knowledge and mental discipline, into blasphemy or trouble of mind.

Haughtiness is not the state in which such deliberations
412 pass through the mind, nor when the mind is sometimes overpowered by them, but when the mind clings to them. It is manifest that even for such a one there is repentance. But when he loves haughtiness, he does not know how the repent. If he does repent, he does not cling to haughtiness. Not that the evil man sins or commits a fault against God, but that he clings to his evil [is the great thing]. For the former denotes the weakness of nature, the latter audaciousness of the will.

Also by praises on the part of his fellowmen is a man's mind struck with madness, when he desires to perform among them deeds which are above his measure, in order that the glory of his greatness may increase, and men may perceive that he is very near to God. Many have excelled in behaviour and were rich in gifts from God and have been honoured with the gift of [performing] signs. But afterwards they became changed and received a blow from God, the same men that were so honoured before. The cause of this was that they were not able to bear the many gifts which they had received and were drawn towards haughtiness and were rejected by God as dross and became foreign to the high rank in which they were. And many who were quiet and firm in mind, whose words were weighed, whose behaviour was chaste, whose knowledge was envied, have become an object of fear for those who know them and a lamentable aspect for those who see them.

With loud weeping raise thy voice unto God and beg for
413 humbleness. Fill thy mouth with thy tears and stray ashes on thy head. Do not rise from the earth nor lift up thy head

from the ground, before God has shown thee mercy and has made thee to pass away from this life, saved; or till He has compassion upon thee and gives thee humbleness. And do not desist from mourning before perceiving that thou hast received it, lest thou shouldst be found suddenly as one of these [1].

And even when thou hast received [humbleness], do not lift up thy eyes, nor look towards the sky, nor satisfy thy eyes with the aspect of men nor let thy heart have rest from fear and prayer. Perhaps thou wilt be saved from the evils which are prepared by the demons, in this discipline full of darkness, narrow, with many stumbling-blocks, incomprehensible to human nature.

Believe me, my brother and consider my words as true: thou art not able to understand all the power of the demons, and thy knowledge is not sufficient to remain standing before their artifices. Let now therefore be poured out within thee a stream of light, in which the love of Christ is found and by which thou art conducted within the wall of divine mercy, to the honour of the humbleness which thou hast found.

When thou enterest into the darkness of temptations where the light withdraws itself and thou art given over to be tempted in that thick darkness of the soul into which those enter who are abandoned by God and given over to the demons, then thou wilt know that thou findest thyself face-
414 to-face with them as a child that does not know where to go. All thy knowledge will be confuse as a little child. Thy mind which was firm in God, thy veracious knowledge, and thy sound spirit will be in the midst of the ocean of doubts.

By one thing canst thou vanquish them: by humbleness alone. As soon as thou takest hold of this, their whole power vanishes. Do not take it for [a sign] of the health of thy soul when thou goest thy course in serenity through thy joy in God, but when thy being bound up with [earthly] things does not turn thy mind away from the love of God or thy neighbour, nor thy connection with several persons from thinking of our Lord, to whom be the glory. May He keep us near to Him and in intercourse with Him. Amen.

1) who have been described in the above passage

LIX

A PROFITABLE DISCOURSE

True is the word of our Lord who has said that no one can possess love of God side by side with love of the world; nor mingle with the world and with God, nor care for the world and care for God. Apart from all that is connected with vain glory, many of us generally deviate because of bodily want, we who have promised to serve the kingdom of heaven but who do not remember the promise of our Lord who has said: If ye bestow all your care upon the
415 kingdom of heaven, I shall not leave you in want of the needs of sensible nature; but these things will come to you spontaneously before ye think of their use at the time of want, although I do not even let you want because of care for them.

Upon the soulless fowls which have been created in your behalf, God bestows care; and should He neglect you that care for righteousness? To him that cares for spiritual things, even partially, bodily things are prepared even when he does not provide for them, in accordance with their necessity and in their time.

He that shows care for the last named things more than is becoming, will fall from God, even involuntarily. While we bestow care upon things connected with the name of our Lord, He will provide us with both kinds, in accordance with the measure of our care and the importance of the want of each of them. We should however not ask God's care in these bodily things for ourselves as a remuneration for our labours, but we should direct our whole service towards the future hope. For he that once has given himself to excellence with the love of his soul and longs after its service with his whole being, does not think of looking after bodily things, whether they are or are not. How many times does God allow the friends of excellence to be tempted by such things! And not only this; but He even allows many evil things to assail them from all sides; and He smites their body, as in the case of
416 Job, and gives poverty entrance to them an lets them be deprived of their human state, and smites them in all that

they possess, with this restriction only, that the plague should not attain to their life.

It is not possible that we should walk in the way of righteousness and that no troubles should hurt us, nor that the body should not suffer illness and pains, nor that we should remain without varying states, if we really desire to live in excellence. That however a man should wilfully kill or injure himself or harm himself in any way, is a cause of damnation. If he walks in the way of righteousness and follows his course towards God, together with many of his fellows, and one of these things should hurt him on his way, it is not becoming for him to deviate; but he shall accept them joyfully without scrutiny, thanking God because He has given him His gift, God for whose sake he has been deemed worthy to be entangled in temptations so as to become associated with the sufferings of prophets and apostles and the other saints who have endured troubles on behalf of the way of God; [thanking God] because He has deemed him worthy to bear afflictions for the way of excellence, even though they should happen through men, or through the demons or through the body.

These things are not permitted without the divine will, but they happen in order that thou mayest have a cause of righteousness. For it is not possible that God should give the opportunity of becoming excellent to him that desires to be with Him, otherwise than by bringing him into contact with temptations for the sake of truth.

That a man himself is not able to become worthy of such
417 a greatness that he should be led into temptations in behalf of these divine things with joy, but only by a gift from Christ, is witnessed by the blessed apostle. For so great is this thing, that he openly calls it a gift that a man for the sake of the hope in God should be prepared to suffer by faith, saying: For unto you it is given from God, not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for his sake [1].

Then thank without a break Him that has delivered you from the dominion of the darkness of the world and has brought you near the kingdom of His son, and has made you fellows of all the children of light who have suffered for the sake of God, in order that you may gain the part that has fallen to

1) Philippians 1, 29

the lot of the saints in the light. And this is what Peter writes in his epistle: But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye [1]). For you will have a share in Christ's suffering. Therefore, when thou art free from affliction, do not leap up with joy, nor when circumstances assail thee cover thy face with sadness, reckoning this as something foreign to the way of God.

Behold, for years and generations, the way of God has been leveled by the cross and by death. How is this with thee, that thou seest the afflictions of the way as if they were out of the way? Doest not thou wish to follow the steps of the saints? Or doest thou wish to go a way which is especially
418 for thee, without suffering? The way unto God is a daily cross. No one can ascend unto heaven with comfort, we know where the way of comfort leads.

If any one trusts himself with his whole heart to God, God never wishes to take care away from him, namely care for the sake of truth. But thereby he knows that he is guided by God, when He continually sends him afflictions. But those who are guided under afflictions, are never allowed by divine care to fall into the hands of the demons, especially when they kiss the feet of the brethren and hide and cover their shortcomings as if they were their own.

He that wishes to be without care in the world yet guided by excellence, loathes this way. As the blessed commentator says in his interpretation of Matthew: For those who long after excellence, it is not possible to flee from afflictions. For afflictions will necessarily increase to the same measure as the soul fights against contrary powers. But when afflictions leave it, the soul in the first place leaves what belongs to it.

He that says that he is without care, yet is guided by excellence, does not even know whence excellence is born in the soul. For we know what are the governors of excellence. By temptations the gate of heaven is opened before the soul. Our Fathers have guided us in this way. God who gives unto His saints victory in strife so that their deliberations are not turned away from the future hope, will guard and help us by their prayers. Amen.

419 The righteous not only excel in beautiful works by their will but even in involuntary temptations they excel greatly by

1) 1 Peter 3, 14

their tried patience, because they valiantly endure all earthly troubles, expecting the amazing wages of the world to be. The soul which clings to the fear of God does not fear before anything which harms the body.

LX

THAT WITHOUT NECESSITY WE SHOULD NOT DESIRE NOR ASK THAT ANY SIGN SHOULD MANIFESTLY HAPPEN THROUGH US OR UNTO US

The Lord who is always near the saints through the signs of help He sends to them, does not show, without necessity, His power manifestly by performing any perceptible sign, lest the things which are meant to help us, should become impotent or a means to bring us harm. Such is His way, though He care for them to such an extent; that His secret providence does not abandon them one moment. But in all things He allows them to show care according to their power and to fatigue themselves by prayer.

If however the matter is so difficult, that the scale of their knowledge should become too light, after they have spent their force and resigned because nature is not sufficient [for such a task], He will give His supply according to the greatness of His power, as is becoming and profitable to them in
420 His mind. As long as possible He strengthens them secretly in order that they may remain standing before that difficulty. By the knowledge which He grants them He causes its bond to be loosened, and by contemplation He excites them unto glorification, in order that the matter may be of profit to both parties.

If however the case wants manifest action, He will proceed to give this, for necessity's sake. His acts of providence are wise, serving necessity, not chance.

He that without necessity ventures upon this, begging from God and desiring that wonders and powers should happen through himself, is found to be tempted[1]) of the scornful demon in his heart, and even a boaster and one sick in heart.

For to ask God's help in trouble, is becoming. But to tempt

1) Reading ܡܢܣܝ with Ferdjan and the Greek translation (σειραζόμενος)

without necessity, is a dangerous thing. He is not even truly a righteous one, who desires this. But that which the Lord does without any man's will, is found by most of the saints. That a man should desire this wilfully, without necessity, is apostasy from watchfulness and aberration from true knowledge. And if he that asks is heard on this point, because of his daring and his persuading our Lord, he is led unto a thing which is still more serious. But those who are truly righteous, do not desire this; and they not only do not count upon this
421 but they do not even ask for it, if it is given them; neither before the eyes of men, nor even privately.

Unto one of the saints, because of his serenity, the gift was granted that he knew beforehand if any one should visit him; but he asked God, and he persuaded others to pray for this, that the gift might be taken away from him.

The Fathers did not use this freedom of speech not even in times of necessity. When the blessed Ammon, a holy man in truth, one of the admirable Fathers, went to the great Mar Antonius and wandered in the desert he did not say: O God take me up and set me down there where Antonius is — though he would have been able to do something like this, because of his being near to God, and because this was a case of necessity: for it is said that those who are wandering in this desert incur danger. Notwithstanding all these things, he did not say this to God, but said only this word: O Lord, let not Thy creature perish. — Doest thou perceive the humbleness, doest thou understand the true wisdom of the Fathers? And
422 God, because He knew that the man was true and not led in his deliberations by haughtiness, showed unto him His care for the saints, and did to the man as his greatness deserved. And so, though Ammon did not beseech, God did what was becoming. For Ammon lay down to sleep; and rising he saw as it were the hand of a man hanging above his head in the sky and showing him the way, till it went and stood still above the cave of the blessed Antonius. — Doest thou perceive God's care for His housemates? It would have been possible even not to let him err. But God desired that Ammon should know how much He cared for him. So He let Him err and showed him afterwards manifestly the way, not through a man, but through an angel and in the air. Blessed be God's care for the saints.

Recollect also what happened to Aba Macarius. When he went to Skete, bearing baskets, and grew fatigued and weary, he sat down because he could not walk any longer. But he did not ask from God that He should do unto him anything, by His influence, to give him comfort. But he trusted himself unto God saying: O God, thou knowest that I have no more strength. Then at once, in a moment, by divine influence, he was taken up and placed there whether he wished to go, he and his baskets.

Those who are righteous in truth, constantly think in their heart that they are not worthy of God. And they consider themselves as true in so far as they deem themselves to be wretches. And they sincerely confess, secretly and openly that they are not worthy of His care. And as sinners and wretches
423 they bestow care and painstaking upon everything and trust themselves unto God, in faith, though, as far as their strength goes they do not desist from what they ought to do, being instructed by the Spirit that they should not neglect to care for their duty but to labour as long as they live.

The time of rest He has preserved for the world to be. And those in whom God dwells do not desire that they may have rest here and be liberated from torments, although consolation in spiritual things is given unto them from time to time in secret.

Excellence is not that a man, on reaching it, should give up care and painstaking. But this is [the sign of] the immanence of the Spirit, that a man constantly subdues and compels himself, even if it should be possible to perform the thing in comfort. For the will of the Spirit is not to accustom those in whom it dwells to laziness and to invite them to comfort, but to labours and greater trouble. And it will teach them alertness and confirm them by temptations and lead them towards wisdom.

It is the will of the Spirit that those who love it, be in vexations. In those who pass their life in comfort, not the Spirit of God but the Spirit of Satan dwells. The Spirit of God is not pleased with bodily comfort, nor does it find pleasure in a life of comfort, but in a life of vexations. Satan on the other hand finds pleasure in a life full of comfort, according to Our Lord's witness. The Holy Spirit flees from comfort;
424 as it is said by the holy Fathers: The Spirit of God does not

dwell in a body softened [1]) by comfort. But it looks after a place where people strain themselves, with an emaciated body, and a prepared soul; and with them it takes habitation, teaching them how to live during this small space of time.

Those who love God complete their life under all kinds of trouble. For all the righteous have driven out this world by means of vexations. According as they came nearer to God, their vexations increased. For one of them said with oaths: I die every day. I conjure you by your honour, o my brethren, that it has been given me in our Lord Jesus Christ to die every day. Therein they differ from other men, and that God lives in them [appears from the fact] that they live in troubles whereas the world delights in comfort. God has not chosen that those who love Him should enjoy bodily comfort, but it is His will that as long as they live they should be in trouble in the world, afflicted, vexed, needy and lonely, naked and poor; sick, scorned and beaten. A standing place they have not; their heart is broken; their body is humbled; their acquaintances disavow them; their mind is full of distress; their aspect is strange to all creatures; their dwelling place is strange to all mankind; their habitation is solitary and lonely, bereft of the sight of the world, void of every sign of the things which cause joy in this world; destitute of any comfort. Mourning, is found in it; joy, is far from it; afflictions, are frequent in it. They do not even possess plenty of that which the body needs as all men do. Their bed is the ground; their faces are parched by fasting; their knees tremble from weakness. Their internal organs are unfitted for their customary purpose through service alien to human habit. They weep, and the world laughs. They are sorry, and the world is joyful. They fast, and the world takes comfort. All creatures enjoy a sweet sleep, and they wake in prayer. During the day they are wearying themselves and during the night they prepare themselves for struggle. The saints live a bitter life in the world, with a humbled body, an afflicted soul and in distress on all sides.

Thus it is the will of God that all those who are near to Him should live in miserable circumstances, being humbled and wretched in their whole soul and body; some through

1) Dwell and softened are expressed by the same root in Syriac

voluntary troubles; some through the vexations caused by their sufferings; some through the bitter pains which they bear in their bodies; some through the misery and the persecutions of men; danger of sufferings, danger of the demons, danger of illnesses, danger of poverty. Others have been persecuted; others have been put to death; others have been sawn asunder; others have been stoned, others have been drowned in the sea; others have had their limbs cut off alive; others have been delivered to scorn and contempt; others have been
426 punished by the flames, others by prison, others by terrible flogging; others have been delivered to the sword; others have gone round, clad in hides of lambs and goats, and have become as lost in the desert. Troubles the saints have undergone on mountains and in caverns and in the holes of the earth. Of such people according to the witness of the apostle, the world was not worthy. But what is more marvellous than all these things, they did not expect to be saved or to find rest on account of all these according to the word of the blessed apostle. Glory to Him that crowned them, He that by the suffering of the cross has also completed this path with all its previous sufferings, that also His saints may follow His steps.

Fulfilled has been the word of our Lord: In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have good cheer [1]). By the force of this good cheer, these saints acquire the power to be patient. May God, by whose power the saints have been patient in these struggles without becoming weak in their hope, strengthen His hope in us all. Amen.

Without troubles, no life. God did know that two kinds of gladness cannot be in one man. And because it is impossible to cling to His love when the body is in comfort, He has withheld men from this, and has strengthened His love in their soul by bereaving them from all worldly pleasure. May Christ, whose love is stronger than death and fire and sword
427 and exile and alienation from family and loss of life — and no difficulties can remain standing before His love of His friends — reveal in us the power of His love. Amen.

1) John 16, 33

LXI

FOR WHICH CAUSES GOD ADMITS TEMPTATIONS TO HIS FRIENDS

By the love which the saints show unto God in return for what they bear for the sake of His name in that they undergo trials without leaving the excellency which God loves, their heart acquires freedom to look towards Him without a veil and to ask from Him with confidence.

Great is the power of prayer in freedom of speech. Therefore He allows that His saints are tried by all afflictions, on the way towards Him, in order that they may acquire freedom of speech and may experience His help and His care for them in that He is found to be their saviour in danger; and in order that His friends may acquire wisdom through temptations so that they are not dull and destitute of training. So through temptation they acquire knowledge concerning everything, and are not laughed at lightly by the demons.

For if He would train them by good things only they would lack training in other things and they would be as blind men in trials. And if someone should say: He guides them without training and without selfknowledge [the conclusion would be] that He wished them to be like oxen and asses who possess
438 no freedom whatever. There is even no taste in the good, when a man has not first been tried by temptations of evil and afterwards finds it and when he does not use it as his own, in knowledge and freedom. How sweet that knowledge is which has been acquired through training and the experience of labours, and how much strength it imparts to him that has found it after many personal experiences, is known to those who are acquainted with the help afforded by it.

They learn the weakness of nature and the help afforded by divine power when He first withdraws power from them while they are in temptations. Then they perceive the weakness of nature and the strength of temptations and the wickedness of the Fiend, [perceiving] of which nature their Fiend is, with which nature they are clad, and how they are guarded by divine power; and how, though they run and are uplifted,

when the divine power withdraws itself from them, they become weak before all passions.

Through all this they acquire humbleness, and press close to God, expecting His help and persevering in prayer. How could they have acquired all this, if they had not experienced myriads of evils, without God's caring for their being surrounded by them? 'And lest I should be exalted through the abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan' [1].

Man acquires also a confirmed faith by temptations, through experiencing divine help, when it is granted several times. And furthermore he is without fear and acquires courage by temptation, on account of the training he acquires.

420 Temptation is useful to every man. The virtuous are tempted in order that their riches may increase; the lax, in order that they may be preserved from injuries; the sleepy, in order that they may be armed with alertness; those that are afar off that they may come nearer to God; the housemates, that they may approach with freedom of speech.

A son that is not trained, cannot profit by the riches that are given to him from his father's house. Therefore God tempts and vexes first, then He shows His gift. Glory to that Lord who by strong drugs brings us the delight of health. There is no one, to whom the time of exercise is not hard; and there is no one, to whom the time during which he is obliged to drink the potion of temptations, is not bitter. But without this, a sound constitution cannot be obtained. Even to endure is not of our own. How should a clay vessel endure the vehemence of the waters, if the divine fire had not hardened it? If we daign to ask in humbleness fervently and perseveringly, we shall receive everything.

1) 2 Cor. 12, 7.

LXII

THAT BY THE THOUGHTS WHICH STIR IN A MAN HE KNOWS TO WHICH DEGREE HE BELONGS AND WHICH THOUGHTS FOLLOW

As long as a man is negligent, he fears the hour of death; when, however, he comes near to God, the coming of Judgment. But when he proceeds firmly, both kinds of fear are taken away. How does this happen? While [1]) his knowledge
430 and his behaviour are of a bodily nature, he is frightened by death. But when his knowledge is of a psychic nature, and his behaviour is steadfast, his mind is moved by the thought of Judgment every moment. In the first state he belongs wholly to nature; in the psychic state he is moved and guided by his knowledge and by his discipline. And he is happy in the neighbourhood of God. But when he reaches true knowledge by the motion of the apperception of God's mysteries and becomes confirmed in future hope, he is consumed by love.

He that is bodily, fears as an animal fears being slaughtered; he who is rational fears the Judgment of God. He that has become a son, is pleasing to love, not to the staff of him who terrifies. ‚I and my house, we will serve the Lord' [2]). For love annihilates fear. It not only fears not but it even longs after departure. Love is the dissolver of temporary life. He that has reached the love of God, does not desire to stay here any more.

My beloved ones, because I was foolish, I could not bear to guard the secret in silence, but am become mad, for the sake of my brethren's profit. For true love is not able to cling to the cause of love apart from friends.

Oft when I was writing these things, my fingers paused on the paper. They could not bear the delight which had fallen into the heart and which made the senses silent. Blessed is he that is in constant intercourse with God and has withdrawn himself from worldly things, being with Him only, in intercourse founded upon his knowledge. And if he has to be patient, it will not be long before he sees fruits.

1) Introduction 2) Joshua 24, 15

431 Gladness in God is tronger than earthly life. He that has found it, is not only free from the trial of the affections, but he does not even turn towards his life any longer. Furthermore he has no other apperception, if he really has been deemed worthy of this.

Love is sweeter than life. And understanding concerning God, from which love is born, is sweeter than honey and honeycomb. What is the sweetness of love which excels life? Love is not spiteful if it has to undergo a myriad of deaths for the sake of its friends.

Love is the child of knowledge, knowledge the child of health of soul. Health of soul is a power born from patient endurance. And what is knowledge? The apperception of immortal life. What is immortal life? Apperception in God. Knowledge concerning God is the highest of all desirable things. And the heart that has received it, does not want the sweetness of anything on the earth. Because to the sweetness of the knowledge concerning God nothing is to be compared.

O Lord, fill my heart with life everlasting. Life everlasting is consolation in God. He that has found consolation in God, to him the consolation of the world is superfluous. How is it perceived in a man that he has received wisdom from the Spirit? Thereby, that wisdom teaches him kinds of humbleness, internally and by his senses; then it is revealed to him in his intellect, how humbleness is acquired.

432 How is it to be perceived that he has reached humbleness? Thereby that it is a vile thing to him to please this world by act or word, and thereby that the glory of this world is ugly in his eyes.

What are the affections? The allurements that lie in the things and the stories of this world, evoking a bodily want, which never cease as long as the world exists. If a man however has been deemed worthy [to know] the divine intellect and to taste and perceive what is more profitable than those things, their allurements will not enter his heart, because their place has been taken by a desire which is better than those. Then the allurements of [worldly] things and those which are born from them, will no longer approach his heart. But they will stand outside idle. Not that the allurements of the affections do not exist any longer, but the heart which could

receive them is dead to them and living to some other thing. Not that it desists from watchfulness and the labour of discrimination, but there is no longer any struggle in the mind, in as much as the inner being is satisfied by the delight of some other thing. So, when a man is satisfied with delicious and fat food, and his inner being with abundance and delight, and then he sees food which is unclean and steeped in its own filth, his inner being does not need care to check it from desire or to withhold it from gazing at it with lust; nay, the whole inner being is even shaken and troubled by the sight
433 of it. This does not happen on account of the uncleanness of the food, for possibly he had been accustomed to it before; but on account of the comparison with the excellence of that other food which had filled his inner being with every delight. So it is with the health of the soul. If the heart has really received the apperception of spiritual things and the contemplation of the world to be, its inner being will regard the affections in the way mentioned.

And just as a man when he loses his riches and becomes poor and destitute of the glorious and excellent food in which he delighted in the royal palace, forgets its delicious taste, and those glorious dishes are no longer with him and his stomach is deprived of the delight of their abundance, and he has necessarily to turn towards food which is by far inferior — so it is with him that was deemed worthy of health of soul. If he is deprived of that divine delight because he neglects his duty and falls asleep and becomes neglectful he again turns towards that sordid food, that has been steeped in all filth and which is unclean; and his inner being does not examine, because the stomach of his soul is empty. For to the hungry soul even bitter things are sweet.

And farther: no one to whom a treasure is entrusted will indulge in sleep. If he keeps the law of watchfulness and
434 clings to the labour of discernment, and through knowledge derived from these drinks in life, the struggle of the allurements of the affections will not approach his mind at all. And these allurements will not be held back with effort from entering the heart, but the satiety of the inner soul which is full of knowledge, and the desire of amazing visions which is found in it, restrain them from approaching to man with their intercourse. This does not happen, as I have said, while man

desists from watchfulness and from the labour of discrimination which are the guardians of true knowledge and of psychic light; but it happens without the mind being involved in struggle, for the reasons which have been expounded.

The food of the poor is despicable to the rich and the nutriment of the sick to the healthy. But riches and health are established through watchfulness and diligence. This is witnessed to by nature. As long as a man lives he needs watchfulness and diligence and alertness in order to guard his treasure. But if he leaves his territory, he becomes ill and is robbed [of his possessions]. For a long time even he will possess strength through his previous health, but when this does not increase, he will become a prey to weakness and indigence. Does not even nature instruct us concerning these things? And is there any heavenly thing which cannot be discussed in a comparison which we find in our nature? Even our Lord used to confirm all spiritual things by examples from nature and in this way He used to establish their power in our souls; not only things relating to the shortliving earthly pawn, but also those belonging to the true body, and the
435 completion and the truth of our future. Do not wonder at what I have said. There is not only work to be done till the fruit shows itself, but even till the time of gathering the fruit there is still work to be done. By the time of gathering the fruit I mean the grave. It may occur that, when the fruit has become ripe, hail of a sudden will strike it.

He that mingles with things and proceeds to have intercourse, cannot be certain that his health will stay with him. I say: using and seeing [are the same]. O Jesus Christ, king of the worlds, make me worthy of desire in Thee. The man who adheres to intercourse with God, and who has mingled his life with it, is greater than any other man on the earth and [greater] than any service performed by rational creatures. When thou prayest unto God, say to Him only this: O Lord make me worthy of becoming dead to the intercourse with this world, in truth. — So thou canst comprehend the whole prayer. And try diligently to accomplish this in thyself in reality. If prayer is followed by practice, thou surely art standing in the freedom of Christ.

Being dead to the world is not only this that a man keeps himself far from mingling with [worldly] things. But this is

being dead to the world in truth: that a man in [1]) his mind does not long after the goods of the world.

If we are accustomed to beautiful meditation, we are ashamed of the affections when we come in contact with them (this is known by those who have experienced it in their soul), and so we shall be ashamed to approach unto their causes.

436 If thou desirest to cling to some work for the sake of the love of God, then set death as the limit of thy desire for it. So by practising it, thou wilt be elevated unto the degree of martyrdom through every suffering and injury which smites thee within the domain of death, if thou perseverest till the end without giving way. Meditating upon a feeble deliberation weakens the power of patience. But the confirmed mind imparts a strength which does not belong to nature, to him that adheres to its contemplation. O Lord, make me worthy of hating my life, for the sake of life in Thee.

Dealings in this world resemble a copy of a book which is still in rough draft. What a man desires or whenever he wishes, something can be added to or taken from it, and so he may alter his writing. Future dealings resemble documents drawn up as bonds, provided with the seal of the king, to or from which it is not allowed to add or subtract anything. As long as we are in the place where altering is possible, let us observe ourselves; and while we have authority over our lifebook and our book is still between our hands, let us zealously add [acts of] beautiful behaviour, and let us scratch from it the loss of the old behaviour without freedom. We are allowed to scratch out faults, as long as we are here. And God will take into account every alteration we make in it. May we be deemed worthy of life everlasting before we appear before the king, and He puts His seal on the book [2]). As long as we are in this world, God will not put His seal
437 neither on our good works nor on our bad ones, before the hour of departure, when we have completed the service of our country and we prepare to strike camp.

So it is becoming for us, as the blessed Mar Ephraim says, that we make our soul resemble at all times a ship that is prepared [for sea]. When the wind [required] for her will blow,

1) The text has: in the intercourse or occupation of his mind

2) Cf. the Muslim doctrine of the خواتيم

she does not know. And the army does not know when the trumpet will give the sign to start; and to the tenant it is not known when the landlord will give the command to depart. Now if these are thus prepared for the sake of a short absence, as they will soon turn perhaps and come back, how much more is it becoming for us to be prepared and ready before the long absence of the day of death. May Christ, the mediator of our life, grant us to reach that long bridge and the gate of the new world, in a state of preparation. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

LXIII

WHY IT IS THAT PEOPLE WHO ARE IN THE PSYCHIC STATE OF KNOWLEDGE CONSIDER SPIRITUAL THINGS IN ACCORDANCE WITH [THEIR] BODILY GROSSNESS AND HOW IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE MIND BE ELEVATED ABOVE THIS AND WHAT IS THE CAUSE WHY WE ARE NOT FREED FROM IT AND WHEN AND HOW IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THE MIND TO REMAIN WITHOUT IMAGES AT THE TIME OF PRAYER

He whose majesty is blessed, will open the gate before us, so that we have no single wish than desire of Him. When
438 we so abandon everything, and our mind goes out to seek Him alone, there will be no thought in it of anything which screens its face from the aspect of the Lord of the Universe. The more the mind abandons the thought of visible things, o my beloved, and the more it thinks of the future hope, in accordance with the degree of elevation above bodily thoughts and intercourse with them, to the same extent it will be subtilised and become clear during prayer.

To the same extent as the body, the mind is made free from the bonds of [worldly] things; and to the same extent as it is made free from the ties of thoughts, does it become serene; and to the same extent as it becomes serene, is it also subtilized; and to the same extent as it is subtilized, is it lifted up above the emotions of this world which bears the stamp of grossness. And it knows that it shall look on God as He is, not as we are.

If a man has not been deemed worthy of revelation before, it is not possible that he should know this. And if he does not attain purity, his emotions are not made clear so as to look at the hidden things. And until through his [spiritual] riches he be freed from all that is seen, he is not freed from emotions for those things, and he does not become devoid of deliberations that cause darkness. And even as darkness and enchaining thoughts, so the affections are there.

If a man is not made free from all those things which I have mentioned and from their causes, he cannot consider the hidden things of the mind. Therefore our Lord has ordered us to practise renunciation before any other thing, and flight from the troubles of the world, and freedom from common human thought. Who does not forsake his whole human state and all that he possesses, and deny even himself, he cannot be a disciple to Me [1]; lest the mind be injured by anything:
439 by sight, by hearing, by care of [worldly] things, their loss or their increase, or by man. And thereby that He has bound our mind by hope of Himself alone, He has caused the whole care of our deliberations to look towards Himself. And in Himself He has bound the whole care of our mind, after having freed it from all other things, that thence we may long after intercourse with Himself, because of our care being continually directed towards Himself.

Prayer further requires also training, that through long practice the mind may become wise. For after renunciation which frees our impulses from bonds, prayer requires constancy that through constancy and time the mind may acquire training so as to know how to restrain its deliberations and to learn through experience many things which it cannot receive from others. Any [state of] discipline is prepared [2] by the preceding one; and the preceding one is necessary for the existence of the following.

Prayer is preceded by reclusion; reclusion [is practised] with a view to prayer; prayer in order to acquire love of God; for in prayer are found causes for loving God.

Also this we must know, my beloved ones, that any hidden intercourse, or any meditation upon spiritual things, is to be denoted by prayer or comprehended under the name of prayer

1) Cf. Luke 14, 33 2) literally: educated

or included within this denomination: be it recitation with dis-
440 crimination, or songs in praise of God, or painstaking thought of our Lord, or prostration of the body, or psalms of glorification, and so on. For from them is received instruction concerning veracious prayer; and from the latter love of God is born. And love is through prayer; and prayer through dwelling alone. And loneliness serves the purpose, that we should have a place where we can converse with God in solitude. Loneliness is preceded by abandonment of the world.

If a man forsake not the world first and renunciate all that he possesses, he cannot attain to loneliness. So abandonment of the world in its turn is preceded by patience, and patience by hatred of the world; hatred of the world by fear and love. For if the mind is not terrified by the fear of Hell and incited by the love of [future] good, the hatred of this world will not arise in him. And if the mind does not hate the world, it cannot forego its intercourse and comfort. And if the mind has not acquired patience before, it cannot choose dwelling in solitude without companions. And if it does not choose a lonely life, it cannot abide in prayer. And if it is not constantly in intercourse with God and cling to those impulses which are interwoven with prayer and to those kinds of instruction which are in prayer, as we have said, it cannot perceive love.

So the love of God proceeds from intercourse with Him; the intercourse of prayer from solitude; solitude from renunciation; renunciation in its turn from patience; patience from
441 hatred of desires; hatred of desires from fear of Hell and the expectation of the [future] good. Desires are hated by him that knows the fruits thereof, namely what they prepare for him and from what good he is deprived for their sake.

So every discipline is connected with that which precedes it, takes increase from it and proceeds unto others which are higher. And if one of the middle links should fail, the following could not maintain itself and it would appear that all were loosened and lost.

LXIV

ON THE MANY VARYING STATES WHICH CLING TO THE MIND AND ARE PURIFIED BY PRAYER

To choose what is good, is the part of the good will of him that desires this. To accomplish the choice of the excellent will, this belongs to God and it requires much help on His part. Therefore we have to combine the good desire which is awakened in us, with continual prayer. Not only in order to ask from Him help, but also to discriminate whether it concords with His will or not. Not every beautiful desire falls into the heart by divine action, but [only] that which is profitable. There are beautiful things which man may desire though they do not help him. Such desires may even be sent by Satan, even though they be esteemed to be helpful. How many times does the thing desired not fit his measure; and
442 Satan has contrived it to his detriment, compelling him to ask it, though he has not yet reached this [stage of] discipline or though he is a stranger to the rank of its scheme; or the time is not fit in which Satan incites him to accomplish these things; or he is not able to perform them, either through [lack of] knowledge, or through bodily weakness, or through the time not being favorable. At any rate, though it does seem beautiful, it either troubles him, or it causes him bodily harm, or it places a hidden snare in his mind.

So, as I have said, we have to combine continual and diligent prayer with theseemingly good desire which is awakened in us, saying, every one of us: May it be Thy will regarding me, to accomplish in fact this good which I have choosen and which I desire to practise, if it concords with Thy will. To fix my will on it, is easy to me; to practise it, is however not possible for me without a gift on Thy part. Though in truth both are thine, to will and to do [1]. For it is not without Thy grace that I have surrendered to or been shaken before that which stirred in me. It is the custom of him that desires any good thing with discrimination of mind, to work for it in

1) Cf. Philippians 2.13

prayer continually; and the force [he acquires] thereby, he will use as an aid for his service. And then wisdom which distinguishes truth from falsehood through much prayer and labour and watchfulness and beautiful longing without break, will come to light, in continual tears, humbleness and heavenly help, especially when its opponents are deliberations of haughtiness which remove from us God's help, and which we can annihilate by prayer.

LXV

443 ## GOOD ADVICE GIVING INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING WATCHFULNESS AND DIRECTIONS CONCERNING THE WAY OF DISCIPLINE BY WHICH A MAN MAY ACQUIRE A HIGH RANK

Repentance [1]) is the mother of life. It opens to us its gate when we flee from all things. The grace which we have lost, after baptism, by a lax behaviour, is restored in us by repentance, through discrimination of mind. From water and spirit we have put on Christ, without perceiving His glory. By repentance we enter into His delight through the discriminating love which rises in us.

He who is destitute of repentance, is destitute of future delight. He who is near to all, is far from repentance. He who is far from all, with discrimination, is the true repentant. As soon as a man withdraws from men and concentrates upon himself, impulses of repentance will show themselves in his mind. He receives the seed of life from grace and, as an embryo, the affection of discrimination moves in him, and in his heart is stirred the thought of eternal life in the future and the hope of resurrection and the thought of Judgment.

Do not think that without divine grace suffering falls into the mind, which receives [it] secretly, as a gift through divine mercy, because of a sudden contrition and a longing after life. As also the blessed Euagrius says [1]): A purifying drug is the
444 hot contrition of the soul, which is given by the Lord through the angels to those who repent, that through diligence puri-

1) Cf. Introduction

fication from the affections may be granted. Further he says: The fire of a furnace is the hot contrition of the soul, which through the grace of Christ happens to the soul at the time of prayer so that the thoughts attain contemplation. Its lack is cured by living water.

The beginning of repentance is humbleness without artifice. Splendid garments are a confusion of repentance. The way towards wisdom is the regulation of the limbs. Bodily effervences are a confusion of wisdom. True wisdom is looking towards God. Looking towards God is silence of the deliberations. Solitude of the mind is quietness with discrimination. The moisture of the senses is a fountain of deliberations. Appereception in God is the depth of humbleness.

True contemplation is the mortification of the heart. The heart which is really dead to the world, is wholly astir in God. True mortification is the motion of life. It is better to smell life by desisting from all, than to build life by desisting from smelling. Better is he that builds his soul than he that builds the world. It is better to imbibe life than to distribute life. He whose outward limbs are dead, his inner emotions are alive. He whose outward limbs are alive, has killed the limbs of wisdom. Humbleness with discrimination is true knowledge. True knowledge is a fountain of humbleness. He that is humble in his heart, is humble in his body. He who is audacious in his body, is audacious in his heart. He who is
445 perturbed in his body, is perturbed in his heart. He who is perturbed in his heart, is foolish in his mind. He who is foolish in his mind, his ways are evil. Whose way is evil, he is dead in life.

If thou lovest humbleness, do not love finery. A man who loves finery cannot bear contempt. And to take to lonely works, is difficult to him. And he is ashamed of submitting to him that is inferior to himself.

The servant of God does not adorn his body. Know that every man who loves bodily finery is sick in his inner being, though he performs beautiful [works]. And to every one who loves visible profit, it is impossible to acquire true love of any one. And every one who runs after honour, is a slave of this world. If those who do these things are disliked by thee, then restrain thyself from the same things.

Humbleness and chastity are promoted by the same idea

of contempt. And from him that loves honour and finery thou requirest not the former properties in their truth. If thou lovest chastity, do not love distraction. Things which happen to thee through divagation do not allow thee to cling to chastity with caution. No one who loves distraction, is chaste. And do not believe that any one who converses with lay people, is humble. Every one who loves God loves a solitary life. That a man who is given to distraction should guard truth in his soul without a stain, is impossible.

Many show the appearance of repentance; but only he pos-
446 sesses it in truth, that is grieved in heart. Many run to find the affection of the heart; but only he finds it in truth, that possesses continual silence. Every one who is a servant of God, loves grief.

Every one who possesses profuse speech is certainly empty within, though he tells amazing things.

Inward grief is a bridle of the senses.

If thou lovest truth, thou must love silence. This will make thee illuminated in God like the sun and it will deliver thee from the idle thoughts of ignorance; silence will even unite thee with God.

When thy kneeling gives thee delight, do not hasten to reach its end. Would that it never ended as long as thou art in this life. When thy mind is concentrated, do not cut off thy prayer. Do not count as idleness a long concentrated prayer, as against the long recitation of Psalms. Love kneeling during prayer better than the sound of the sentences. If it profits thee, then accomplish it instead of thy service.

If the gift of tears be given thee during thy service, do not deem the delight which is in it as a pause in thy service. For the gift of tears is the accomplishment of prayer.

Do not wonder if sometimes, while thou art kneeling in prayer, thy mind, being concentrated upon it, desist from praying. This thou wilt find during service as well as during recitation. When thy mind is distracted, it will rather adhere to recitation than to prayer. Thy method of recitation has to be parallel to the scope of thy discipline. Not all books are useful for the concentration of the mind. Most books containing
447 instruction are not useful for purification. Various books cause to thee distraction of mind. Know that not every book containing instruction concerning the fear of God, is also useful

for the purification of the inner being and the concentration of the deliberations. Do not dispute about the exact significance of these things with him that does not know the truth.

Love rest more than labours. Honour recitation, if possible, more than standing [1]), for it is a source of pure prayer. But there is no reason at all to despise standing. Beware of snares.

Recitation of Psalms is the root of discipline. But know this, that the sentences [sung] with a distracted mind suit better bodily labour. Mental grief is better than bodily fatigue. At the time of weariness be accustomed to spur on thy zeal somewhat. For the heart greatly needs to be alert to render fervent the emotions of the soul. As against desire, so natural warmth is also helpful at the time of weariness; for it chases the cold from the soul. Usually weariness befalls us at two occasions: through a heavy stomach and through great weakness caused by labours.

The regulation of service is the light of the mind. There is nothing like knowledge.

Let every prayer which thou offerest during the night, be honoured in thy eyes above all labours of the day. Do not make heavy thy stomach, lest thy mind become confused and
448 thyself troubled by distraction while standing during the night; and thy limbs be lax and thyself filled wholly with relaxation; thy soul be dark and thy impulses troubled, and thyself absolutely unable to concentrate them upon the sentences on account of darkness; and the taste of everything become weak to thee; and the sentences of the Psalms sung keep not their sweetness to thee, sentences the discriminations of which the mind used to taste with delight on account of its swiftness and illumination.

When the order of the night-service is troubled, then the mind will also be confused during the service of the day and proceed in darkness, without taking delight in recitation, as usually. For it is as if a cloud lies over the impulses, when they are in emotion in prayer or in meditation. The delight which during the day is lavished upon the ascetic is poured on the watchful mind on account of the light of the nightly service.

From him who has not experienced solitude for a long time thou canst not expect to learn anything additional concerning

1) in prayer or in vigils

the goods of the ascetics even though he may be very wise and instructive and possess a range of habitual virtues.

Be cautious not to weaken thy body too much, lest weariness overpower thee and thou shouldst make thy soul cold against the taste of its service. As in a scale man ought to weigh his discipline. When thou art satisfied, be somewhat cautious against free speech in thyself.

Let thy sitting be in chastity, also at the time of bodily want. Especially chaste and cautious thou hast to be when going to sleep, not only thy deliberations, but also thy members being watchful. Be watchful against presumption when good states [1]) come upon thee. Thy weakness and thy dullness
449 in the face of its subtlety thou must communicate to our Lord in zealous prayer, lest evil things should be allowed to try thee. For fornication follows haughtiness, and aberration presumption.

Use handiwork as far as thou needest it, especially as thou art shut up in solitude. Let not thy hope on Him that provides for thee, indulge in any weakness; God's provisions in behalf of His housemates are amazing; even in the desert without human hands He provides for those who inhabit it and hope on Him. If our Lord supplies thee with that which the body needs, though thou doest not labour but carest for the soul only, then some thought will arise by the trickery of the murderer [2]) namely this, that there necessarily must be on thy part some cause for all this care. And with this deliberation, God's care will be withdrawn from thee. And at the same time myriads of temptations will arise and assail thee, having their origin either in the neglect of those who used to care for us, or in the recommencement of pains and illnesses that are caused [3]) in our body. God does not give up His care on account of this emotion alone, but when the mind sticks to it. On account of in voluntary emotion God does not chastise and judge a man, not even when we give way to it for a short time; but at once pain pricks us and contrition comes to us. Our Lord will not seek retribution for such a fault; but only for such a one as the mind really clings to, in that we glance at it unconsciously as if there

1) ܫܘܚܠܦܐ
2) Satan 3) lit. stirring

were no harm in it and without thinking of anything wrong Perpetually we have to pray to our Lord in this way: O
450 Christ, Thou summit of truth, let Thy truth dawn in our hearts, that we know to walk in Thy way according to Thy will.

When for a short time or longer some evil deliberation shows itself often in thee, know then assuredly that Satan wishes to lay a snare for thee. And pay attention to it in due time. If it is however a right-hand and good one, know that the Lord wishes to give thee some share of life and that for this cause this deliberation is astir in thee so unusually often. If it is a dark deliberation and thou art in doubt concerning it because thou canst not make out clearly whether it is helpful or treacherously hidden in a scheme of beauty, then pay attention to it in keen prayer night and day, with long vigils. Do not push it from thee, neither deliver thyself unto it but pray diligently and fervently because of it. Do not cause crying to our Lord, and He will show himself manifestly, [so that thou knowest] whence it is.

Love silence above all things. It brings thee near the fruit which the tongue is too weak to interpret. At first we compel ourselves to be silent. Then from our silence something is born which draws us towards silence. May God grant thee to perceive that which is born from silence. If thou beginnest with this discipline, I do not know how much light will dawn in thee through it. Concerning what is said about the admir-
451 able Arsenius: that Fathers and brethren came to see him, but that he sat with them in silence and dismissed them in silence — do not think, my brother, that this happened by the action of his will alone, though in the beginning he had to compel himself. After some time some delight is born in the heart from the exercise of this service and by force it draws the body towards remaining in silence.

Many tears are born in us by this discipline, by the amazing sight of things which the heart perceives distinctly. Sometimes by suffering, sometimes on account of ecstasy the heart becomes small as a child; and as soon as it insists in prayer, tears will burst forth.

Great is the man who, side by side with bodily endurance, possesses admirable customs in his soul.

If thou placest all labours of this discipline [1]) on one side

1) solitary life

and silence on the other, silence will outweigh them. There are many warnings of the Fathers which need not be kept laboriously when a man approaches unto silence, and the practice of which becomes superfluous, because he is elevated above them, and is near the mark. Silence is also helpful for solitude.

For it is impossible that, living in an inhabited place, we should not meet with any one. Even that angel of God, Arsenius, who loved solitude more than any one, could not wholly avoid meeting others. For in such a place we meet Fathers and brethren and innumerable other persons, and we have to visit the church. When that blessed man saw that it
452 was impossible to avoid this, so long as he was in the vicinity of an inhabited place (though his dwelling-place was at a distance of many miles from a human settlement, even from the solitaries who dwelt in those places), he learned from grace this means: continual silence. When sometimes it was necessary for him to open his door to some of them, they enjoyed his aspect only; conversation was superfluous.

Many fathers have been led by this sight, to become careful also as to their own person that, their spiritual riches might increase, through the instruction they received from the aspect of the blessed one. They continually saw him silent, so that many of them put a stone in their mouth [1]), others tied a rope to their inner wall for the sake of recollection, others wearied themselves by unusual fasting; when they had to go to meet other people they imposed the trial of hunger upon themselves. For hunger greatly helps those who try to acquire a greater concentration of the senses. And many used to do such things in order to acquire this self-control of beautiful aspect that imparts life.

Many fathers I have found, o my brethren, great and admirable, who cared for the direction of the senses and the bodily attitude more than for other labours, because from them is
453 also born the direction of the deliberations. Many causes, independent of his will, meet a man and make him leave the domain of his freedom. And if he did not guard his senses through the regularity of custom which dominated his soul before, they would for long prevent him from recovering his mind, finding his former quiet.

1) Ghazali tells this about Abû Bakr

The education of the heart is, to be occupied with its hope. The education of discipline is to free oneself from every thing. The recollection of death is a wholesome bond of the outward limbs. A hook [drawing] the soul towards life is the joy that rises in the heart on account of hope. A drink of knowledge are the perpetual temptations which the mind every day draws from within, through the two varying states. The budding of the heart is the conviction of the resurrection in faith, which hope receives from within.

Deem me worthy, my Lord, to see in my soul Thy bounty, before I depart this would, that I may perceive in my self in that hour consolation, as have done those who in good hope have left this world. Open my heart, o God, through Thy grace and purify me from the communion with sin; and make level in my heart the way of repentance, my God and my Lord, my hope and my boast, my strong refuge, by whom my eyes receive light, and let me receive understanding by Thy truth.

Deem me worthy, O my Lord, to taste the delightful gift of repentance by which the soul is made free from the bondage of sin and the whole will of flesh and blood.

Deem me worthy, o Lord, to taste this affection in which reposes the gift of pure prayer. My saviour has reached the amazing passage through which the soul leaves the visible
454 world and in which begin new impulses for entry into the spiritual world, and experiences of new apperceptions.

He that begins and accomplishes well, places his discipline upon this foundation, entreating God unceasingly that He may deem him worthy to perceive this apperception in which is sown the knowledge of the future order of things through imperishable hope, which through divine grace is preserved for man after the completion of this world.

But he that begins pervertedly goes from above downwards: he begins with joy and he ends with weeping; and he becomes devoid of knowledge and hope, as a formless body which not attained to the reception of the soul, because it has not completed the state of preparation in the womb, but has reached the end of the life of form [1].

Contempt for intercourse with the world is the sign of a

1) ܚܝ̈ܐ ܕܨܠܡܢܘܬܐ

soul that has perceived its hope. A hidden alertness implies drowsiness regarding visible things.

The weapon of the heart is faith in Christ. Who by the desire of hope has withstood even death, death is esteemed as nothing in his eyes, and so are being exiled from his country, and the strife of the demons and alienation from men, and lack of the consolation of the world. What is the consolation of visible things and the being occupated with them, as compared with the delight of hope that is perceived in the heart? As he that has abandoned the body in the drunkenness of his joy, through the flaming faith which kindles his heart, so that
455 all visible things are hidden from him and he knows nothing in the creation through the heat of his body and the emotions of his soul, and as he that abides already in the kingdom, does he account [earthly things] because of the faith of his mind.

Though sometimes we are subject to despondency because of loneliness — perhaps this is permitted in us by Providence — yet we also possess through our heart's faith the consolation of hope which is too great for words; and through this hope, troubles are accounted by us as nothing, even death. And well has one of those who are clad with God, said: Sufficient is the love of God, as a consolation for him that believes, even when he loses his self. How should troubles injure him who despises even the delights of comfort for the sake of future good?

Also this I advise thee, o my brother, that in all thy discipline the scale of mercy be preponderant; through this thou wilt perceive God's mercy for the world. Our own state becomes to us a mirror in which we behold the true Prototype, in those things which naturally belong to that Essence.

By these things and the like we become illuminated so as to be in motion unto God, with a clear mind. A heart wicked from of old, cannot become serene.

A merciful man is the physician of his own soul; for he drives away from his inner being the dark mist, as by a strong wind. Mercy is a good investment with God, according
456 to the Gospel of life: Blessed is the merciful: for he shall obtain mercy [1]). Not only in the world to be, symbolically also here. What mercy is greater than this, that when a man is

1) Matthew 5, 7

moved by mercy unto his follow man and becomes his partner in suffering, our Lord delivers his soul from gloomy darkness which is intelligible Hell, and brings it in contact with the light of life, for its comfort? The blessed Euagrius has well said: A clear way is founded upon mercy.

Therefore, as I have said: Let a merciful heart preside over thy whole behaviour, then thou shalt find peace with God. Be careful, that no evil be ever done to any man through thy hands, not even to the evil one [1]). And when it is possible for thee to deliver the iniquitous from evil, do not omit it. Not that, if the matter be far from thee, thou shouldst go and mix thyself with such things — such a deed does not belong to thy duty — but if the matter is put in thy hands, and thou hast power over it, because it has been placed before thee accidentally as a trial, in that God wished to try thee by His admitting it, then be cautious regarding thyself lest thou become a participant in the blood of the iniquious, because thou doest not hasten to deliver him. But try with thy whole soul to save him, even if thou shouldst die for his sake. Then thou wilt really be a martyr and as one that has suffered death on the cross for sinners. And pray God, that this [2]) may not happen through thee. But even if he be worthy of evil, let him receive the judgment of his deeds by the hands of
457 others. It does not become thee to regard the worth of his deeds. Let good [alone] happen to him by thy hands.

Think of Him who bears all, the deeds of all men being placed before His eyes, clearer than the sun; and if He liked He could destroy all men by the breath of His mouth. Thou wert not appointed to pronounce [the judgment of] vengeance against deeds and their perpetrators, but it is thy duty to implore mercy on the world, to abide in vigil for the salvation of all, to share in the suffering of every man, righteous and sinners. And thou must know, that if he deserve it, justice will bind him within a short time, by the hands of others who are fit for this deed; and thou wilt save thy soul and become a living martyr. But even this thou hast not to ask or to care for, but to implore God's mercy upon him, that he may change and become as it is the will of God that he should

1) Cf., p. 14, 70 etc.
2) viz. the punishment of the iniquitous.

be and may depart life in righteousness and not [awaiting] the retribution of wickedness.

Be instead of an avenger, a deliverer; instead of an accuser, a peace maker; instead of one who delivers, a martyr; instead of a plaintiff, a dependant. Beseech God in behalf of the sinners, that they may obtain grace. And pray for the righteous, that they may be preserved. Vanquish the evil ones by this kindness, and make the zealous wonder at thy bounty. Those who love justice, make them ashamed by thy mercy. With the afflicted be afflicted in thy mind. Love all men. And be far
458 from all men. Recollect death, and prepare thyself for thy entrance into it. Embellish thy course. Remember that the sins of all men go before them to the court of justice.

Be not dejected because of trespasses. I do not say that thou shouldst not suffer; but thou must not account them as being incurable. Better broken than dead. For one who is broken, there is the physician, who on the cross has implored mercy for those who crucified Him, who asked forgiveness for His murderers while He hung on the cross. ‚All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men' [1]), namely on account of repentance. When Simon who had denied Him, had wept a short time, He forgave him. And after His resurrection, He appointed him as the head of His flock. Three times He asked him: Lovest thou me? [2]), even as three times he had denied Him, in order to confirm His pardon. Christ came on behalf of the sinners, in order to heal the broken in heart, and to bind up their wounds [3]). 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore He has anointed me, to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives [4]), and sight to the blind, and healing to those who are broken, by forgiveness.' And the Apostle says in his epistle: Jesus Christ came to the world to save sinners [5]). And his Lord witnesses: For I am not come to call the righteous; for they that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick [6]). There were two debtors to a certain creditor; and because they had nothing to pay with, he forgave both of them; namely: when they had beseeched him.

1) Matthew 12, 31 2) John 21, 16 3) cf. Psalm 147, 3
4) Isaiah 61, 1 5) 1 Timothy 1, 15 6) Mark 2, 17
Luke 7, 42 f.

Our frail nature would not be strong enough if God's justice
459 should proceed to take vengeance. Therefore He uses mercy so that we at all times are bound by our debt.

Do not sin, o man, in hope of repentance, and do not indulge in weakness, confiding in forgiveness. Remember, that death will not be postponed. Do not contrive to approach to the delight of sin, with a cunning mind. God is not mocked [1]). His knowledge precedes thy deliberation: trouble will come upon thee suddenly, and thou wilt cry, but He will not answer thee.

When thou approachest thy bed, because the time for sleep has come, say: O bed, perhaps thou wilt become my grave this night and I not know it. Perhaps in stead of temporary sleep, eternal sleep will fall on me this night, while I thought of preparing for days and months, which I did not see.

As long as thou hast feet, run after the service of righteousness, before they be caught by a bond which it is impossible to sever. As long as thou hast hands, stretch them towards heaven in prayer, before thy arms fall from their joints and thou desire to raise them, and it is impossible for thee. As long as thou hast fingers, raise them unto God in supplication. For there will come a time when the splendid strength of their joints is weakened. As long as thou hast eyes, fill them with tears during prayer, weeping for thy sins,
460 before the moment when sand will cover the black [clothes] and the eyes will become feeble, staring senseless in one direction, without thy knowing it. As long as the heart, the fountain of the deliberations, is ordered by a distinguishing power, bethink of those things which are helpful to thy life, before the soul be hastened on to departure from it [2]) and become a house devoid of its inhabitants.

O thou who art wise, let no deliberation flatter thee with the hope of a long life. As a flower withers by the blowing of the sirocco, so against thee will blow one of the elements which are within thee and without thy expecting it, suddenly thy knees will relax. And while thou thinkest that it is nothing and that thou art curing the illness, suddenly the cunning one will approach, who laughs at the wise.

1) Galatians 6, 7
2) the heart

O, for the wretchedness of our nature! how are we entangled in its love, though God does not desire to leave us in this state. Set thy heart to prepare for departure, o man. As a sage thou must expect departure every hour, thinking every day: the messenger of him that comes after me, has reached the gate; why should I remain sitting? It is a departure for ever, I cannot return hither. Go asleep with these thoughts every night; and meditate upon this deliberation every day. And when [the time of departure] comes, go joyfully to meet it, saying: Come in peace. I knew that thou wouldst come and I have not neglected anything that could serve me on the way.

461 Take provisions for thy long way, o sage. Drive away the heaviness of sleep from thy heart, o companion. Order thy things for departure, thou who dwellest as a sedentary. Morningtime is near, o traveller, why art thou sleeping? Come, prepare thyself, thou sailor who art about to sail off, prepare the utensils of thy ship; for thou doest not know when the wind will begin to blow.

Be ready and prepared before he comes that will destroy thy forms. For Sheol shall make wither their form [1]), and they shall be bereft of the beautiful glory of nature and their bodies will be left in the wilderness. Remember always that destruction of deplorable appearance, that formless scattering of thy senses, that ruin of the building of thy body, that pure mixture that will become mud in Sheol. Blessed is he that with joy meets the recollection of that destruction! Blessed is he that with good hope awaits that event full of mystery, in which the wonder of the Creator's great power is hidden! Spiritual meditation is, to be continually occupied with the hope of [things which will be] after the resurrection.

The beginning of this impulse in the mind lies in the domain of repentance. That which induces the soul to embrace repentance, is the constant thought of future things. Who has been moved by repentance, his hope has turned to the future world. Who has forgotten this, his mind abides in this world.

Who loves intercourse with Christ, loves to be alone. Who loves to remain in the company of many others, he is a friend of this world.

1) Cf. Job 14[20]: Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away.

462 Repentance [1]) is the constant sorrow of the heart at the meditation of that inexplicable statute: how shall I reach that unspeakable entrance? If thou lovest repentance, then love also solitude. For without this, repentance cannot be completed. If there is any one who disputes this, do not dispute with him, for he does not know what he says. If he did know what repentance is, he also would know its place, and that it is not to be disturbed by trouble. If thou lovest solitude, the father of repentance, then love also to accept gladly the small deficiencies of the body, and the blame that arises from them. Without this preparation it will be impossible for thee to live in solitude, freely, without trouble. If thou despisest those things, thou wilt acquire solitude, according to God's will. If thou art wronged or robbed or laughed at or the like, thou wilt not be moved, because of thy love of solitude.

Love of solitude is the constant expectation of death. He that without this meditation enters solitude, having other thoughts, cannot bear those things which, for the sake of solitude, he must bear from all sides: to die for the sake of God, and to live in God. The accomplishment of life is meditation upon death for the sake of God. This brings our mind near to union with God, says Evagrius.

Also this thou must know, o discriminating reader, that lonely dwelling and solitude and reclusion are not chosen by us in order to perform an excellent canonical labour. For it
463 is known that communion with many others gives a better opportunity, because the body preserves its strength better. But if reclusion were not necessary, the pious men that were the holy Fathers, would not have abandoned intercourse with many people. Some of them dwelt in graves, others chose reclusion in a lonely cell, which is greatly relaxing to the body and which does not promote the accomplishment of the canonical rules. And all bodily weakness and misery, and severe illnesses which struck them, they bore gladly during their whole life, even when they were not able to stand on their feet or to offer the usual prayer, or to praise God with their mouth, or to recite a psalm, or to perform any of the [works] which are performed through the body. And bodily weakness alone and solitude with them took the place of all canonical rules.

1) Cf. Introduction.

And this was their occupation all the days of their life. And during all this so called idleness, none of them longed to leave his cell or to wander abroad ceasing from canonical labours, or to enjoy the sound of the glorifications of others in a congregation.

Better is he that perceives his sins, than he that is profitable to the world by his appearance. Better is he that one time has sighed by himself, than he that quickens the dead by his prayer and dwells among many others. Better is he that has been deemed worthy of seeing himself, than he that has been deemed worthy of seeing the angels. The latter
464 partakes of the eyes of the body, the former of the eye of the soul. Better is he that clings to Christ mournfully in solitude, than he that praises Him in a congregation. No one should adduce the words of Paul: For I could wish that myself were accursed by Christ for my brethren [1]). He that has received the power of Paul, he has also the permission to do so. Paul was behaving as he did because a divine order had been given to him to be profitable to the world. As he witnesses to it, that he did not this by his own will; for necessity is laid upon me, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel [2]). Moreover, the election of Paul was not because of repentance, but that he should preach to humanity he received even greater power.

So we must love solitude, o my brother, that this world may die from our heart and we may think of death continually. And by this meditation we shall approach unto God in heart; and we shall despise the emptiness of the world; and its desires shall be despicable in our eyes. Let us joyfully bear, with a sorry body, the continual idleness of solitude, my brother, in order that we may be deemed worthy of delight with those that in the caverns and the clefts of the earth are waiting for the glorious revelation of our Lord from heaven. To Him and to His father and to the Holy Ghost be glory and praise for ever and ever.

1) Romans 9, 3 2) Romans 9, 16

LXVI

465 A LETTER WHICH HE SENT TO HIS FRIEND IN WHICH HE EXPOUNDS SOME THINGS CONCERNING THE MYSTERY OF SOLITUDE AND HOW IT IS THAT MANY NEGLECT THIS WONDERFUL SERVICE BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT ACQUAINTED WITH IT WHEREAS THE MAIN PART OF THEM CLING TO SITTING IN THE CELL BECAUSE THIS IS CURRENT MONKISH TRADITION. TOGETHER WITH A COLLECTION OF SHORT SAYINGS USEFUL FOR THOSE WHO PRACTISE SOLITUDE

Now that thou hast inculcated in me the duty to write to thee on those things which are necessary, I inform thy love by this my writing, in accordance with the promise which I gave thee. As I have found that thou art determined to practise sitting in solitude, with painstaking behaviour, so I from my side will describe to thee in simple words, that which I have heard from discriminating men concerning this service, combining the concentrated sense of their words with personal[1]) experiences [gathered] by practice. And thou, on thy side, wilt profit by being occupied with this letter in thy usual diligent way, because with the discrimination of wisdom thou approachest the concise terms of the lecture of this letter, and not in the usual groove. And thou shalt take them as some elucidation of the rest of thy lecture, because of the great insight and power hidden in them. For the mind is greatly strengthened by such a lecture and it takes from it a
466 weapon against distraction of the thoughts and against dejection which is wont to rise from the hardship of labours and the prolonged sitting in solitude. And it casts behind it the world with attention to its practices, through the radiancy with which it is clad [by the sight of] those things which it meets; the which is the aim of this letter, [namely to make known] what is dwelling and service in solitude, and what mysteries are hidden in this discipline which are not observed

1) lit.: near

by many, and what events the prudent try to reach by solitude; and wherefore they reject the righteousness which is practised among men, fleeing from the sight of the world and choosing the troubles and struggles which are connected with quiet and lonely dwelling. On account of this insight and on account of those things which are found in this letter [readers] will call these solitaries who pass their life in this world in concentrated sitting by themselves happy. To those who do not perceive these things, admonition and advice concerning the order of solitude are vain. Here however I write to the wise, and I give advice in love.

If thou seekest imperishable life during thy short days, o brother, then let thy entry unto solitude take place with discrimination [1]), that thou mayest find the profit which awaits the wise in the path of solitude. Scrutinize its service and do not run after a name. Enter, be profound and bold, learn and acquire and train thyself in all the amazing and liberating distinctions of the ways of service in solitude. Then thou wilt understand, with all the saints, what is the height and the
467 depth and the length and the breadth of this illimitable discipline, because of the illimitable riches which its merchants seek to acquire. And thou wilt not rest, until thou art trained in all the ways of its service [2]).

From every human practice, at its beginning, some profit is expected when it shall be realised; this it is which moves the intelligent to lay its foundations. And this aim makes the mind heroic, so as to bear the difficulties of the matter. The mind even gathers some consolation from it by looking towards it. And after the fashion of an officer of the law, it apprehends the mind, till the matter is accomplished. So, in the eyes of the discriminate, the aim of the severe service of solitude is the harbour of mysteries towards which the mind looks, from the time when it lays the first foundations till the end of the work of building. And as the eyes of the helmsman look to the stars, so, in all his long and difficult labours, the inner gaze of the solitary, during his whole course, is directed towards the aim which he has fixed in his mind the first day when he gave himself to sailing the rough sea of solitude, till he shall find the pearl for the sake of which he has

1) Cf. *The Book of the Holy*, p. 19 2) Text has plural

entrusted himself to the not-to-be-explored floods of the ocean. And his gaze of hope makes light to him the whole burden of service and the difficulties full of danger which meet him in his course.

But he that, as soon as he enters solitude, does not set this aim to the profit [he wishes to gather] from his service, labouring at random as a man that combates the air, will never during
468 his life escape the spirit of despondency. And one of two things will happen to him: Either, no longer bearing the insupportable burden, he will be vanquished and give up solitude altogether; or, if he adheres to it, his cell becomes a dungeon in which he is tormented. And because he does not know that he may expect the consolation which is born from the service in solitude, he is not able to implore through his heart's pain or to beseech in passionate prayer or to embrace the token which our merciful Fathers, from love of their posterity, have left to us in their writings, whereby we could gain our life.

One of them has said: To me the profit of solitude is this, that where I withdraw from the camp in which my abode is fixed, my mind becomes void of the occupations of war and turns to a service which is more profitable.

Another: Solitude cuts off causes which give a new turn to the deliberations and within its walls there grow old and tasteless the recollections of previous things. And when the old matter has disappeared from the intellect, the mind returns to nature in order to direct it.

Another: I run to meet solitude, with this aim, that in my heart the sentences of recitation and prayer may become sweet. And when my tongue has been made silent by the delight of their understanding, I fall, as it were, asleep, my senses and my emotion being benumbed. And when by prolonged solitude my heart has acquired peace from the trouble of recollections, solitude sends me continually waves of gladness which arise from emotions which burst forth from within unexpectedly and
469 suddenly, to the delight of my heart; the which, running against the ship of my soul, and [withdrawing it] from the sounds of the world and from the life of the flesh, immerse it in the deepest depths of quiet in God.

Another: The degree of thy hidden things thou canst understand by thy different emotions. I mean the perpetual ones, not those which are set astir by accident and are made to

pass by time. There is no one clad with flesh whose house is not visited by some traveller belonging to the two various states of good and of evil. If he is disprudent, by those of deficiency, through nature, the fathers of children. If he is faithful, by those of elevation, through the leaven of grace which He has mixed with our nature, the parents of the kingdom on high.

Another: Choose the delightful service of continual vigils, by which all the Fathers have put off their old man and have become worthy of the renewal of the intellect. At these times the soul perceives that immortal life, by which apperception it throws off the garment of darkness and becomes the recipient of spiritual gifts.

Another: It is not possible that a man, while seeing many faces and hearing various sounds foreign to spiritual meditation, and speaking and having intercourse with the like, should keep his mind free so as to gaze at himself secretly, to remember his sins, to hide his thoughts, and to look at those which come, and to become familiar with hidden prayer.

479 Further it is impossible for a man to subdue the senses by the domination of the soul without solitude and alienation from men because the initiated soul becomes united to them and involved with them as in one person and is dragged along with their impulses, if it does not hold vigil with hidden prayer. And then, how vigils and alertness with prayer and recitation, will delight and gladden and give joy and make pure the soul, is well known to those who have practised these things during their whole life, in veracious asceticism.

And thou, o man who lovest solitude, place before thee, as a mark, these indications based upon the words of the Fathers, and direct the course of thy service towards them, and before all things, judge which are those which suit best the aim of thy service. Without them thou canst not be mature in true knowledge; try to show thy endurance especially in them.

Silence is a symbol of the future world. Speech is an organ of this world. A man who fasts is trying to acquire likeness with the nature of the spiritual beings.

Through his continual silence and fasting a man becomes distinguished that in his hidden state is constantly occupied with the service of God. By these mysteries is accomplished, even through those invisible forces, the holy service of the Essence

which governs the world. Some men who have been marked
471 off to enter the divine mysteries, have been signed with such seals as these; some of them have been entrusted with the guidance of a strong people; others have even acquired power over the elements and, midst great admiration, the species [1]) of nature have obeyed their commandments; others have been entrusted with the office of examining, for the universal renovation, the secrets that were hidden in the mysterious silence of the Lord of the universe. And it would not have been beautiful, if with a full belly and a mind distracted by wantonness, such mysteries had been administered, or if the sanits had ventured to elevate themselves to intercourse with God and unto His secret mysteries, unless with weak limbs and a colour livid by the pain of hunger, and a mind conscious of its reason by its having renunciated all earthly deliberations.

When, on account of a long abode in thy cell and troublesome labours and secret observance and restraint of the senses from all contact, the power of solitude gets hold of thee, thou wilt find first that joy which from time to time, without a cause, dominates thy soul. Then thy eyes are opened to see God's creative power and the beauty of the creatures, in accordance with the degree of thy purity. And when the mind by this sight has been snatched up in ecstasy, night and day become one to it in its admiration of the glorious works of God. And then the apperception of the affections is taken away from the soul by the delight of this sight. And by it the soul enters
472 the two degrees of intelligible revelations which belong to what lies higher than purity.

LXVII

AN ELUCIDATION WITH EXAMPLES CONCERNING THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN INTELLIGIBLE THINGS [SHOWING] WHICH USE THERE IS IN EACH OF THEM

Intellect [2]) is a spiritual sense which is made a recipient of the visual power, as the pupil of the fleshly eyes into which perceptible light is poured.

1) ܟܝܢܐ 2) ܡܕܥܐ

Intelligible sight is natural knowledge which by power has been mixed with the order of nature, and which is called natural light.

A holy power is grace, the sun of distinction for those things, which hold a middle position between light and sight. Species[1]) are those things which are intermediary and distinguished by light so as to become sight. The affections are as it were some dense entities, which, placed between light and sight, hinder the distinction of things.

Purity is the clearness of the intelligible air, through the mediation[2]) of which spiritual nature circulates in us.

The reverse way: If the intellect is not of a sound nature, knowledge does not influence it. If the fleshly sense is harmed by some cause, sight is taken from it. If the intellect is sound, but there is no knowledge, the intellect cannot have any distinct influence upon spiritual things without it; just as an eye which is sound in all those things which are its own,
473 and yet, often its visual power is dull. So, if all these [spiritual] things are preserved in their proper state, but grace is not near, they remain, all of them, destitute of the service of their different functions; as it is also during nighttime, when all these things, because of the absence of the sun, remain without function, though they are true and perfect in themselves. I mean eye, sight and things, not those which are distinguishing or distinguished. This is what has been said: In Thy light we see light[3]). Now, even when grace, the intelligible sun, is near and inciting and flattering and working and exhortating, but there is no purity through which (as through the air purified from the density of the clouds and from the matter of darkness) the sunrays attain to us easily, so that we enjoy by their light a sight which is wholly spiritual — then sight is impeded in its discriminating power, nature looses its active force, the soul is hindered from perceiving the second sun which dawns over the world, because of the screen of the body in which the rays of truth are hidden so that they cannot reach us.

Therefore, all that has been said is strictly necessary. And because all these things are hardly to be found without defi-

1) ܟܝܢܐ 2) lit. bosom
3) Ps. 36, 9

ciency any one, not many are found who reach a partial completeness in spiritual knowledge. Such a deficiency has its origin in impotence of the intellect, or in neglect of the aim,
474 or in the unpreparedness of the will, or in lack of purity, or in want of guides, or in the impediments of grace (for riches do not suit the fool, nor is a slave entitled to rule over many things) — or in the hindrances of time, place and mode.

LXVIII

SHORT SECTIONS

You must know, my brethren, that the sensual eye through its visual power alone (which is administered unto it from the brains as it were through a channel), without partaking of other light, is not able to receive [the images] of the different things. All natural apperceptions are placed on the same level as the intelligible things as regards spiritual behaviour in this respect; and [as for] the natural force of the intellect, which is also called psychic knowledge — it is impossible for the soul to participate in truth by contemplation, without receiving divine light. This is based upon excellence of behaviour, which is acquired when the affectible part of the soul is built upon natural health. For many have endeavoured [to acquire this] while being entangled in psychic and bodily affections, by philosophical training, being supported by the latter alone; but they have lost even the truth which they possessed and have ruined their usual visual power. And just as eyes which see in the air fantastic images because of their weak sight which cannot reach the humid matter in them, so every one of them
475 considers as truth one image which presents itself to him. And when all the images of all of them are united, then, in stead of one truth, there appears a variety of images. And this happens to them because they have not asked for the rays of grace which shines so as to purify the soul. Truth is the apperception concerning God which a man personally tastes by the perceptive power of the spiritual senses of the mind.

The flower of spiritual knowledge is divine love, which has its origin in radiant insights which are found by the spirit during prayer. Love is the fruit of prayer, which, on account

of contemplation originating in it, draws the mind towards a predilection which never becomes satisfied; the mind clings to this predilection for prayer without growing dejected, be it that it prays apperceptibly, with the body, or by the silent motion of the mind, fervently and eagerly. Prayer is: the impulses of the will being dead regarding fleshly life. For it is alike when a man prays veraciously and when he dies from the world; this means that he denies himself, and this means continually being in prayer.

It is known to those who know the scriptures what beseeching in veracious prayer is. And it is known that those who have devoted themselves to this lonely state in order to acquire lonely prayer through their demands, thwarting their desire, do not follow their nature when they arouse trouble against their soul because of the contrary affections which they stir
476 in their soul after prayer.

So the love of God is found in selfdenial. As from the seeds of the sweat of fasting the blade of chastity grows up, so does lasciviousness grow up from satiety and impudence from repletion. Against a hungry stomach wanton deliberations never direct themselves. Every food which we receive within us is added to the humours of the natural seed which is collected in our body. And when the organic limbs are filled with the influx which is gathered there from the whole body, and when it happens that the bodily [eye] sees [something], or when some involuntary recollection is awakened in the heart, then at once, together with the thought a sensation of delight is astir and spreads through the whole body, so that, even if the mind is very strong and chaste and cautious in its emotions, still, by this apperception of the limbs, the discriminating power of the mind is troubled at once, and is, as it were, cast down from the height where it stood, and the holiness of its deliberations is perverted.

And its pure chastity is defiled by the confusion which is caused by the affection that is astir in the heart on account of the burning of the limbs; and at once half of its force is lost, so to say, and the former scope of its hope is forgotten; and though it has not entered into the struggle, it is defeated without strife or labour on the part of its fiend, and vanquished by the subduing will of the body.

477 To such an extent does copious food and constant satiety

compel a man's good will that, although he is moving steadily in the harbour of chastity, he stoops to comply with that which he never would have stooped to think of. And when he lies down to sleep, alone, a host of thoughts clad in impudent images surrounds him. And his chaste bed is made by them a theatre and a brothel, where he deals and speaks with his thoughts in drunkenness and defiles his holy limbs, though no woman is near to him.

What sea is so disturbed by storms as the steady mind is stirred by the vehemence of the waves assailing it in the sea of the body, through a full stomach? O chastity, how is thy beauty made splendid by sleeping on the ground, by the suffering of hunger, when sleep flies from thee on account of the leanness of the body and the emptiness of the stomach, which is made a deep pit for the intestines between the ribs by abstinence from food. But by indulgence in food and comfort, evil representations and impure images are formed and come into existence. Then they proceed and show themselves to us in the hidden place of our mind, inciting us to mingle with them secretly by impudent actions.

Emptiness of the stomach makes free room for the mind which is devoid of deliberations and all tumult of thoughts. But when the stomach is replenished and satisfied it is made thereby a place of sights and a theatre, even if we are in
478 the wilderness and alone. For he that is satisfied desires many things.

Thou understandest that thou hast been deemed worthy of psychic apathy therein not, that no evil deliberations pass through thee — that is [the absence of] the movement of the impulses which are in the body, the which is impossible — nor that thou vanquishest them easily, the thought not having been defiled or disturbed at all, however exalted this may be; but that, through the intellect being totally occupied, the mind is not even permitted to combat with or to crush them, but that as soon as deliberations elevate their head, it is dragged away from them by some involuntary force, which by custom or grace, begins to ferment in the heart which is the house of the intellect. The struggling mind is different from the rank of priesthood. The mind which, by heavenly mercy, is dead to the world, to it things cause simple deliberations only, without the strife of battle, though from the motion of the

limbs an apperceptive power without equal [is born]. Perfection which is joined with flesh and blood rules over that which originates in flesh and blood, but it does not annihilate the peculiarities of nature while vital impulses still move in elementary life, and the foundation of existence, on account of the four humours, is subject to various emotions.

LXIX

479 ## HOW THE INTELLIGENT HAVE TO DWELL IN SOLITUDE

Listen, my beloved, to what our love says to thee.

If thou desirest that thy labours shall not be empty and thy days idle and thyself destitute of the profit which the intelligent expect from the discipline of quiet, let then thy entering into solitude take place with discrimination, not in a kind of groove, as it is with many. But let there be an aim towards which thy mind directs the labours of its behaviour[1]. And interrogate those who have solid knowledge, through experience, not through reading only. And exercise thyself in all the wonderful and liberal distinctions of solitude, without taking rest before thou art trained in all the ways of its service. And at every step thou takest, examine whether thou art walking in the way, or thou hast erred away from it on one of the ways leading to the desert.

Thou must not believe that the true discipline of solitude is accomplished by visible labours alone. If thou desirest to reach by personal experience that which our Fathers have found, thou must secretly have signs and tokens in thy soul, at every step thou takest, by which thou canst recognise the truth of our Fathers or the error of Satan. A few of them, written in order that thou mayest become wise in thy way are as follows.

480 When thou seest, in solitude, that thy mind is able to use freely its righthand impulses and that there is no compulsion in its rule over any of them, then know that thy solitude is right. And if, while thou art performing thy service with discrimination, without distraction as much as possible, the words are suddenly cut off from thy mouth, and the bonds of com-

1) *Book of the Dove*, p. 19

Verb. Afd. Lutterk. 1922 (Wensinck).

pulsory silence are placed on thy soul and this phenomenon is constantly repeated, then know that thou art making progress in thy solitude and that its simple beginnings are taking increase.

For simple solitude is rejected by justice. And every simple [act of] discipline, among discriminate sages is accounted as a lonely, helpless member.

And if thou seest that at every deliberation which stirs in thy soul, at every recollection and vision happening during solitude, the surroundings of thy eyes are filled with tears and thy cheeks are moistened by them, without compulsion, then know that before thee, in the opposing camp, there begins to grow a breach.

And if thou findest that thy spirit, from time to time, descends within them without unusual efforts, and abides there some time, whatever that time be and afterwards thou seest thy members as it were in great weakness, while peace reigns over all thy deliberations, but [the weakness] remains continually the same, then know that the cloud has begun to cover the tabernacle.

If, during thy abiding in solitude, thou findest that harsh delibe-
481 rations reign over thy soul, and that it is tyrannised by them every moment, and that at all times the mind is attracted by those things which were administered before, namely, when it is desirous of vain investigations — then know that thou art fatiguing thyself with solitude in vain and that thy soul is corrupted by distraction, and that there are outward causes, or inward neglect of duties, especially of vigils and recitation. Then direct and fix thy will. But if thou doest not find peace from the assaults of the affections as soon as these days begin, then be not astonished.

Now [1]), if the bosom of the earth when the sunrays have ceased, preserves their heat for a long time, and if an aromatic smell and the odour of perfumes which spread through the air, remain a long time before they are dissipated and become effaced — how much more certain is it, that the affections, like dogs accustomed to lap up blood at the butcher's, will stand at the door barking, when the usual food is withheld from them, till their old force has abated.

1) Introduction

When neglect begins to penetrate into thy soul secretly and to spread gloom, and the house is near to being filled with darkness, then thou wilt secretly perceive in thyself these signs which will soon appear: Thy faith will be weakened. Visible things will arouse thy covetousness. Thy confidence will diminish. Thy neighbour thou wilt wrong. And thy whole person, thy mouth and thy heart, will be full of vituperation against every
458 man and thing and against that which thy deliberations and senses meet, and even against the most High. And thou wilt be terrified by the frailty of the body which has rendered thee pusillanimous at all times. And from time to time thy soul will be shaken by fear, so that thou shalt be frightened and terrorised as it were by thy shadow.

For by faith I do not understand that which is the foundation of the common confession, but the intelligible force that by the light of the mind supports the heart, and by inward testimony stirs in the soul great confidence in God; so that the soul does not provide for itself, but casts all its cares on the Lord without thinking of any of them.

Then, when thou art making intelligible progress, thou wilt soon perceive in thy soul these dim signs. By hope thou shalt become strong, and by prayer rich. And continually abundant profit will be the part of thy mind in all that thou meetest, and thou wilt perceive the weakness of human nature. On the one hand thou must beware of haughtiness; on the other hand let injury against thy neighbour be despicable in thy eyes. Departing the body has become desirable to thee because of the desire to be near those things in which we are going to live. And as for all the afflicting accidents which happen to thee manifestly and secretly thou wilt soon find that all of them happen to thee justly, in all sincerity which is far from
459 presumption. And concerning all these thou shalt make confession.

These are signs for the watchful and for those who constantly dwell in solitude and wish to reach veraciousness of behaviour. Those who are relaxed, do not want subtle signs indicating hidden traps. For they are also far from hidden virtues.

As soon as one of these begins to show itself in thy soul, then at once try to understand towards which side it begins to incline; then thou shalt know at the same time to which category it belongs.

LXX

THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND THE DEGREE OF OUR BEHAVIOUR BY THE VARYING STATES OF OUR MIND WITHOUT CHILDISHLY JUDGING BY THE MANY DISTINCTIONS OF OUR LABOURS ONLY THAT WE SHOULD RECOGNISE THE DEGREE OF OUR SOUL AS SAGES BY THE JOY WHICH DAY BY DAY IS SECRETLY PERCEIVED IN IT. THE SUBTLE ORDER OF INITIATED KNOWLEDGE

Examine thyself constantly, my beloved, and pay attention to the steadiness of thy labours, and the troubles assailing thee, thy lonely dwellingplace, the subtlety of thy mind and the keenness of thy knowledge, the long period of thy solitude, and the frequent drogues of temptations that are continually administered by the true physician in order to heal the inner man; sometimes however by the demons. Sometimes they come through illnesses and bodily sufferings, sometimes through the terrors of the emotions of thy soul when it thinks of the woes which will come in the end. Sometimes through
484 the tenderness and fostering of grace there will arise warmth and sweet tears and spiritual joy and all the other things, to be short.

Doest thou see with certainty through all these that thy wounds are going to be healed, that is — that the affections begin to grow weak? Put up a mark and enter into thyself continually and see which of the affections have become weak before thee; which of them have reached their end and are altogether finished; which of them are beginning to become silent in the health of thy soul, and not by the departure of emotional influences, through the maturity of the mind and not for lack of causes.

Doest thou now see perfectly — as thou observest that living flesh, which is peace of the soul, is going to cover thy open wound — which of the affections continually trouble thee, and which from time to time; and which are bodily, which are psychic, and which of a mixed nature; and whether they stir darkly, as being ill by recollections, or they assail the

soul vehemently; whether they consequently behave stealthily or imperiously; and how king mind, the governor of the senses, looks at them when they knock at the door; whether it combates and vanquishes them by its force, or even does not look at them or think of them; and which of them are the remnants of old ones, and which have been newly formed; and whether the affections stir through representations, or by apperception without any representation; whether there is recollection without affections, and emotion without allurements.

By these [symptoms] it is possible to recognize the degree which the soul occupies. If the first mentioned alternative is to be affirmed (though it does not prevail), this shows that
483 there is still strife in the soul though it is strong against [the contrary powers]. If the second mentioned alternative is to be affirmed, it almost proves that, as scripture says, David sat in his house and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his [enemies] [1].

These things are not to be connected with one affection, but with the natural affections of desire and love also, as also with the affection of love of glory, which forms images and phantasies and allurements. And the affection of the love of money — when the soul participates of it secretly, though it is not persuaded to commit any action thereby — forms in the mind images of things connected with the love of money in the examples of wealth-gathering, and it induces the soul to think of them and it excites the desire of possessing them, and so on.

Not all affections combat man by allurements. For some of them burden the soul with troubles only. Dejection and despondency and distress do not bring allurements nor comfort, but only burden the soul with heaviness. The readiness of the soul is demonstrated by a victory fought against those forces which make use of allurements in the struggle.

For a man ought to possess all these, namely subtle knowledge and signs, in order that he may perceive, at every step he takes, how far he is gone and in which country his soul has begun to walk, in the land of Kanaan or beyond the Jordan.

Consider also this: whether the soul, through its illumination, possesses sufficient knowledge for these distinctions; or distinguishes them dimly, or is wholly destitute of such distinctive

1) 2 Sam. 7, 1

486 faculties. Dost thou find with absolute certainty, that the deliberations have begun to become clear? Does distraction desist from the intellect at the time of prayer? Which affection troubles thee when the mind approaches unto prayer? Dost thou perceive that the power of solitude envelops the soul with the quiet and the unusual peace which it engenders in the mind? Is the mind continually snatched away spontaneously, by immaterial emotions, towards those things which it is not allowed to interpret to the senses? Does there suddenly blaze in them joy which makes the tongue silent by its incomparable delight? Does there constantly flow from the heart some enjoyment which envelops the whole being in rapture, without thy perceiving it? Is sometimes thy whole body possessed by some delight and joy, which no fleshly tongue can express, so that thou esteemest all earthly things as ashes and dung, even when thou recollectest them?

The first happens sometimes at the time of prayer, sometimes during the recitation; sometimes when through constant and prolonged meditation the spirit has become meditative and the mind fervent.

The second usually happens without these. Often during fortuitous works, usually however during the night and on purpose, between sleeping and waking, sleeping though not sleeping and waking though not waking. And the delight which flows through the whole body is esteemed so high at that time, that it seems as if the kingdom of heaven were nothing else but this.

487 And further consider this: if the soul possesses the strength to reject recollections of apperceptible things by the strength of the hope which reigns over the heart and makes strong the inner senses by an unfathomable conviction; and if the heart has acquired, without forethought, the habit of being captured so that it does no longer [perceive] earthly things, through continual intercourse with our Saviour, and thou possessest knowledge so as to distinguish the different designations of this intercourse, when thou hearest them — solitude cultivated without interruption will make it easy to the soul to acquire the taste of these.

They disappear however, after having been present, through the neglect of those who have received them, and for a long time they do not reappear.

On account of these, man ventures to adduce with confidence the testimony of his own mind; so the blessed Paul says: For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other thing shall be able to separate me from the love of Christ [1]. Then should bodily and psychic trouble, or persecution or hunger, or nakedness or loneliness, or captivity or danger or the sword? No, not even the angels of Satan, nor his powers with their evil cunning; nor glory which makes efforts by its alluring flatteries; nor oppressions and scorn by their vain blows.

If these things, my brother, to a larger or lesser extent have not begun to show themselves in thy soul, thy labours and troubles and all thy solitude are vain efforts. And even
485 if miracles were wrought by thy hands and thou shouldst quicken the dead, this would be, nothing in comparison with the absence of these. And it is becoming that thou arousest thy self and with tears beseechest the Saviour of the world that He may take away the veil from the heart, and disperse from the inner firmament the darkness of the clouds of the affections; and that thou mayest be deemed worthy of seeing the rays of daylight.

Then thou wilt not dwell in darkness as one who is dead for ever. Continual vigils with recitation and frequent kneelings performed between, will not fail one day to give this good to him that is diligent. For those that have found them, have found them through these works. And those who will find them, will be able to do so through these works.

And while we are constantly abiding in solitude, performing these works, and the mind is not bound by any thing or any man without the soul, then by the works of inward excellence we shall soon find in ourselves a partial, but veracious apperception of them and we shall acquire certainty also concerning the rest. Those who, while abiding in solitude, have experienced God's lovingkindness, do not need much persuasion. Nor is their soul sick by the affection of unbelief as those who doubt the truth. The witness of their mind is for them sufficient persuasion, more than myriads of words not founded on experience.

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 38.

LXXI

480 ON THE INFLUENCES PROCEEDING FROM GRACE

Thou must perpetually place a token in thy soul, and pay attention to it. And when thou perceivest that divine care begins to reveal itself to the soul, then understand that thou art near the harbour of purity. As soon as man begins to be lifted up above the affections, this holy force will cling to the soul, without leaving it, day or night, showing it God's providence. And even the particulars of what is and comes to pass, of yes and no, what happens to a man secretly and manifestly and the facts relating to the creation of this world, are revealed to the soul by that force which clings to it and which reveals to it the creative power of God and shows it divine providence which, without a break, follows and visits this whole creation. And it shows the soul how this providence follows man at all times, and, though he does not perceive it and does not know it, preserves him against adversities at all times and directs him towards what serves for the salvation and the rest of his soul and body and to gain life.

Now this divine force, which works all these, shows itself secretly to man, by intelligible revelation to his spiritual nature, which is intellect. When man has been deemed worthy to receive this power within his soul, he abides only in ecstasy and silence and tears which always flow as water, so that he desists from
490 all work.

And thou must gaze at all times at this sight of God's continual care for the work of His hands: the mind absorbed in ecstasy, the senses at rest, weak man prostrated on his face in prayer, [in astate] in which no tongue can speak and in which no heart can pray, but by astonishment at these things even prayer is cut off.

This is the idleness which is more profitable than work, when a man is purely at rest, with his senses and his impulses, being continually prostrated before his Lord. And even his bones in silence send up a glorification to God, in this so-called idleness; as the prophet says: All my bones shall say:

Lord, who is like unto Thee?[1]) At this time, above all affections, thou findest the demon of haughtiness bound and thrown at the feet of the soul. By this gift, as it is said, man becomes worthy of the love of God and of complete humility.

This first gift is tasted through solitude. And those who, in service and observance, have abided within absolute solitude, must necessarily know it. But when a man leaves solitude and begins to be lax, it is withdrawn from him. And when he enters again and cares for himself and clings diligently to the usual service, he is again supplied with it, and it shows its force to the soul. Then, when man has become wholly perfect, this force will cling to him inwardly and outwardly and
491 not one hour will he be without sighs and tears and the rest, if he does not neglect[2]) the pure order of his service. Even now there are men who have been deemed worthy of this partly. And the peculiarities of the degree of perfection they recognize from that which they possess partially. For, when a man has tasted a small quantity[3]) of wine from a large skin, he knows how all the rest is, even when others drink a part or all the remainder.

A man who possesses [this gift] in perfection, will not soon be found, nay hardly at all. For this power is a gift of the observance of solitude; and because in this our enervated generation there is none who keeps perfect solitude and complete observance, we are also destitute of its gifts[4]). He who possesses these signs in writing of ink, but their practice is not found in him by experience, resembles a man who bears in his arms a cither adorned and provided with strong strings, but his fingers do not know, because they are not trained, to play thereon and to bring forth different melodies for his own delight. For he only possesses the cither, but not the required art. And he needs others to play on it before him and give him enjoyment.

Do not rejoice when thou art rich in the knowledge of many things; but rejoice when that which thou knowest is found with thee practically. The former without the latter will retire gradually and even end in haughtiness, through idleness. When thou art zealous in the latter, thou wilt necessarily be illuminated

1) Ps. 35, 10
2) ܡܙܘܪ, meaning uncertain
3) ܡܢܩܝܬܐ
4) cf. *Book of the Dove*, Introduction, p. XVI

by it without instruction. The eye of knowledge is experience; its growth is brought about by continual service.

492 This will be to thee a luminous token of the serenity of thy soul: when thou, examining thyself, findest thyself full of mercy for all mankind, and when thy heart is afflicted by pity for them and burns as with fire without personal discrimination. While by these things the image of the Father in heaven is continually seen in thee, thou canst recognize the degree of thy behaviour, not by the discrimination of the labours, but by the varying states to which thy intellect is subject. The body is then wont to swim in tears, as the mind gazes at spiritual things, while it is as if from the eyes there flowed brooks which moisten the cheeks, without compulsion, spontaneously.

Now, [1]) I know one who even during his sleep was overwhelmed by ecstasy in God through the contemplation of something which he had read in the evening. And while his soul was amazed at this contemplative meditation, he perceived, as it were, that he had meditated for long in the motion of sleep and examined the ecstatic vision. It was in the depth of the night, and suddenly he awoke from his sleep while his tears dropped as water and fell upon his breast; and his mouth was full of glorification and his heart meditated in contemplation for a long time, with a delight which did not come to an end. And through the many tears that, without measure, were shed by his eyes, and through the stupefaction of his soul by which all the members of his body were relaxed, and of his heart in which some delight
493 was astir, he was not even able to accomplish his usual night-service, except some psalm at break of dawn, so overwhelmed was he by the many tears which as a fountain broke forth from his eyes spontaneously, and by the other spiritual things.

Let us also be zealous, my brethren. And before we go to sleep, let us many times meditate upon glorifications and recited psalm and passages of the holy scriptures, guarding ourselves against evil recollections and from bad thought. And let us provide [2]) our treasury with every beautiful thing. Then sleep will overtake us while we are full of the recollection of God, while our soul is glowing with great desire for the things that

1) Cf. Introduction.

2) Reading ܢܐܣܝܢ instead of ܢܣܐܝܢ

are good, through the grace of God which surrounds us in our sleep and spends upon us its gifts while we are sleeping, examining us, whether our body is free from any kind of impurity, and the impulses of our heart pure from evil. And through grace it will be impossible for the sons of the prince of darkness to approach us because the sword and lance of grace surround us. But when they find us as they like to find us, when grace has withdrawn from us because it disliked us and has removed us from itself as corpses void of life, then they approach us, with all their evil, and try us by all sordid and fearful impulses, according to the desire of their evil will.

And when such a thing happens to us in our sleep, let us understand at once and recollect and perceive, that in that night God's inspiration [1]) was far from us. And how is it that the
494 demons have not devoured us? Because the divine will in whose hand the soul of all flesh is placed, only allows [them] to approach us, that we should arouse and look at ourselves. It is not possible for them to approach us when [inspiration] is near.

1) ܡܓܢܢܘܬܐ

LXXII

ON TRUE KNOWLEDGE AND ON TEMPTATIONS AND THAT IT IS BECOMING TO KNOW EXACTLY THAT NOT ONLY WEAK AND INSIGNIFICANT AND UNEDUCATED PEOPLE BUT ALSO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DEEMED WORTHY OF TEMPORARY APATHY AND HAVE REACHED PERFECTION OF MIND AND HAVE APPROACHED PARTIAL PURITY AS FAR AS THIS IS COMPATIBLE WITH MORTALITY AND HAVE GAINED EXALTATION ABOVE AFFECTIONS — IN SO FAR AS IN THIS WORLD IT IS ALLOWED BY GOD IN COMBINATION WITH LIFE IN AFFECTIBLE FLESH — HAVE TO STRUGGLE AND ARE INJURED BY THE AFFECTIONS BECAUSE OF THE BODY AND THAT TO THEM ALSO ARE CONTINUALLY PERMITTED [TEMPTATIONS] IN MERCY BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF HAUGHTINESS IN SOME DEGREE AND THAT MANY TIMES THEY TRANSGRESS AND HEAL THEMSELVES BY REPENTANCE GRACE ACCEPTING THEM AGAIN

That every rational nature is liable to deviation without distinction and that varying states pass through all men at all times, the discriminate is able to understand from many [symptoms]; moreover the experiences of each day are wholly sufficient to make him prudent if he is cautious and keeps to what is his domain. [They also show him] how many varying
495 states of rest and unrest work upon the mind every day, so that it suddenly passes from peace to perturbation without any reason from anywhere and falls into unspeakable danger. Even this is clearly described by the blessed Macarius, with great care and devotion, in order to remind and instinct the brethren, lest those who stand in the degree of purity give way to despair at the time of contrary states, when there happens to them an accidental [state] like [a change in] air, provided that this is not due to neglect and relaxation, but that these circumstances contrary to the scope of their mind, happen to them while they are walking in their path.

And also the blessed Euagrius witnessing to this through real experience, has committed it to writing, for the sake of ampler confirmation, as it were lest any one should think that the blessed Macarius wrote this in his letter fortuitously without having examined his words carefully. Thus then by reason of two veracious witnesses like these, the mind may accept, without doubt, its consolation at the time of need.

What then? Varying states happen to every man, like [changes of] the air. Understand it: to every man; for nature is one. Do not think that he is speaking to insignificant men only and that the perfect should be exempt from varying states and that they stay in one class, without liability of deviation and without the impulse of the affections, as the Meṣalleyānē say. Therefore he says: unto every man.

How is this, o blessed man? He says: there are states of
496 cold, and soon after states of heat; and perhaps of hail, and soon there-after of serenity. It is thus for our instruction: strife, then the help of grace. And sometimes the soul runs into a storm and heavy billows assail it; then there comes a different state and it is visited by grace; then joy fills the heart and peace from God and chaste, peaceful deliberations. Grace makes dawn here chaste deliberations on the bestiality and impurity of those whom it had ordered away.

Therefore he warns, saying that after these chaste and peaceful deliberations, accidents will befall the mind, that we should not be sorry or despair; or at the time of rest caused by grace, be puffed up, but that, at the time of joy, we should look at trouble. He says that we should not be sorry when accidents happen; not that we should not resist them, nor that the mind should accept them joyfully as something natural belonging to us, but that thou shouldst not despair even as the man who expected what is exalted above strife, and perfect rest without varying states and without struggles and blows, and freedom from the impulse of any adversity — the which it has not pleased our Lord God to give to our nature in this world so that we should entirely desist from labours and in consequence of this thought thou shouldst be relaxed by despondency and desist from thy course.

But know that all the saints have to face this labour as long as we are in this world, though we have ample con-
497 solation for it in secret. For every day and at all times it is

demanded of us that we give proof of our love unto God by the struggle against temptations. And therefore we should not be sorry; namely, we should not be dejected in our struggle but thus is our way prepared. ‚For he that deviates from this method, becomes a prey of the wolves'. Admirable is that saint, who with a small word confirmed this section that is loaded with significance and absolutely took doubt away from the mind of the reader. ‚For he that deviates from this method, becomes a prey of the wolves'. This means that he, that possesses this intention and is minded to walk out of the way, wishing to go in loneliness a way that has not been trodden by the Fathers, is through this in danger of becoming the prey of old wolves who are clad in lambs' clothes in order stealthily to turn back foolish souls to their evil under the pretence of truth. That at the time of joy we should look at trouble, means: when by the influence of grace, suddenly mighty emotions and amazement of the intellectual vision of what is above nature, fall on the soul; as the holy Euagrius says: when the holy angels approach us filling us with spiritual sight, and all those who were in opposition to us vanish, and there comes peace and unspeakable stupefaction; when thou art in this state; when grace envelops thee, and the holy angels are near and around thee and, therefore, all those who tried thee, have withdrawn from thee, then do not
498 extol thyself and do not think that thou hast reached now the undisturbable harbour and the unchangeable air and that thou art altogether exalted above this bay and the contrary storms and that there is no fiend and no evil accidents. For there were many who have thought thus and have fallen into danger, as Euagrius says, namely: the danger of thinking that thou art greater than many others, and that thou deservest these [spiritual distinctions] and that others, on account of their insufficient knowledge, are destitute of the like; but I possess [those distinctions] duly, and therefore I have reached perfect chastity and the degree of spirituality, and definite renovation.

On the other hand recollect the impure deliberations and the unclear images which printed themselves in thy mind in the winterperiod, and the disturbancies and the disordered deliberations which assailed thee shortly before, during that gloomy darkness; and how easily thou deviatedst towards the

affections and hadst intercourse with them, when thy mind was troubled, without being ashamed before the divine sight and on account of the gifts and presents thou hadst received.

And know that all this was brought upon thee, in order to humble thee, by the care of God, which provides for every one of us as is profitable to him. But when thou exaltest thyself on account of its gifts, it leaves thee, and thou wilt wholly relapse into the practice of those things by which thou wert tried in thy thoughts.

Know, therefore, that the fact that thou art standing, is not due to thee nor to thy excellence; but that it is grace which
499 bears thee on its handpalms so that thou art not moved.

These things thou hast to recollect at the time of joy, when thy deliberation exalts itself, says our holy Father, and then thou hast to weep and shed tears. And humble thyself at the recollection of thy transgressions committed when [temptations were] admitted to thee: perhaps thou wilt be saved by acquiring humility through them. Be not, however, dejected, but expiate thy sins by deliberations of humility. Humility, even without labours, expiates many sins. Labours without humility on the contrary, are not only destitute of profit, but cause us many evils. Therefore, expiate thy sins, by humility, as I have said. As salt is to all kinds of meat, so is humility to all virtues. The force of many sins is able to break this. Therefore it is necessary for the mind to suffer continually by humiliation and by pain borne with discernment. If we possess this, it makes us a son of God; even without service, it allows us to stand before God rich in virtues. Without it, every service and every virtue and all labours are vain.

Therefore God demands the alteration of the mind. By the mind we acquire improvement and by the mind we become despicable. So this alone is sufficient, without [any further] help, to stand before God and to speak in our behalf.

Thank God without break on account of the fact that, notwithstanding thy so weak and easily deviating nature, from time to time thou art lifted up by the aid of grace to such a height and to such gifts and remember in which sphere
500 thou then art — above thy nature, and how when [temptations] are admitted to thee, thou art brought low and possessest a brutish mind. And recollect the wretchedness of thy

nature and how easily thou becomest subject to varying states, as also one of the saintly Fathers has said: When thou art assailed by the deliberation of haughtiness which desires to enumerate thy virtues, then say: Father, look at thy fornication. He means the fornication by which the deliberations are tried at the time of the admittance [of temptations] and with which man is provided by grace, be it as a means of strife or as a means of help, according to the degree in which grace helps us. Seest thou how clearly this admirable Father explains the matter? ‚When thou art approached by the deliberation of haughtiness, because of the elevation of thy behaviour, then say: Father, look at thy fornication!' It is manifest that this Father was speaking to a great one, because it is impossible that deliberations of haughtiness should assail other people than those who occupy a high degree and are behaving in a praiseworthy way. For this affection attacks the soul when virtue has been exercised, in order to bereave it of its performance.

Also from one of the letters of Macarius thou canst learn, if thou desirest, which degrees those saints occupy unto whom temptations are admitted. That letter was written by Macarius to all his beloved sons, showing clearly how struggles and the help of grace are provided by God, through which it has pleased His wisdom to train them as long as they abide in
501 this life, struggling against sin, in behalf of excellence. This He does in order that at all times their looks may be fixed upon Him and that, by continually looking at Him, His holy love may be augmented in them. So that, when they seek continually refuge with Him against the ardour of the affections and the fear of deviations, they are confirmed in faith, hope and love.

So these things are not said to those who continually are in contact with men and wander about everywhere, participating in impure actions and passions [and living] in a state of relaxation. Nor are they said to those who perform righteousness in works which have nothing to do with solitude and who at every moment are captured by the senses, and who at all times are in danger of falling on account of the compulsion exercised on them by the things which happen to them involuntarily, through circumstances which they have not foreseen, so that they are unable to guard completely not

only their deliberation but even their senses. But they are destined for those who by the great watchfulness with which they guard their bodies and their deliberations, keep altogether aloof from the perturbations and conversations of men, and who by having given up all, even their soul, are able to guard their mind in prayer and to receive various provisions from grace, in perfect solitude. And under the arm of the knowledge of the Lord they are brought up and secretly made wise by the spirit, while they have rest from works and the sight of things and possess a mind dead to the world. The affections do not die; but intercourse [with them] dies, because they keep aloof from things and because they are helped by grace.

LXXIII

502 THE CONCISE SENSE OF THE [FOREGOING] SECTION TOGETHER WITH EXPLANATIONS OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID

The concise sense of the foregoing section is to communicate to us that at every moment [1]) of the four and twenty hours of the day, we are in want of repentance. The explanation of the denotation of repentance, in its real practical sense, is continual mournful supplication in contrite prayer, offered to God for the forgiveness of previous sins; and petition to be guarded against future ones [2]). Therefore our Lord also has sustained our weakness by prayer: Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation [3]). And: Pray, and do not faint [4]). And: Watch ye therefore, and pray always [5]).

Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened [6]). And he corroborates His word strongly and exhortates us strongly by the parable of the friend who went to his friend in the middle of the night and asked him for bread. „Verily, I say unto you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is friend, yet be-

1) Introduction 2) Cf. *Book of the Dove*, p. 6 and note 3
3) Matthew 26, 41 4) Cf. Luke 18, 1
5) Luke 21, 36 6) Matthew 7, 7 sq.

cause of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth [1]). And ye also: Pray and do not faint [2]). Blessed is the unspeakable encouragement of the Giver, who exhorts us saying: Ask from me and I will give you gifts.
503 And He will also provide you with all that is profitable, according to His knowledge. These words are full of encouragement and great confidence.

And as our Lord knows that He does not take away liability of deviation before the cup of death [is drunk], and, this being so, that man is near to a change from excellency to deterioration, and nature susceptible of accidents — therefore He urges us to continual beseechings. For if there were in this world a place of security whereto a man could go and thenceforth his nature would be exempt from need and his service from fear — then He would not have exhorted us towards prayer nor would He have urged us diligently. In the world to be men will not offer prayers unto God, with beseechings concerning various things. For in that place of freedom our nature will no longer be susceptible of variation, nor bound by the fear of opposition, but perfect in every way. Therefore His care not only drives us unto prayer and watchfulness, but even scourges us with the whip of temptations, in view of the subtlety and incomprehensibility of those things which continually happen to us and superate the power of our knowledge, things among which we are found continually and involuntarily. And even although our mind be firm and willed to the good, yet often His care scourges us with temptations, as the blessed Paul says: Lest I should be exalted through the abondance of the revelations, there was given me a thorn
504 in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that He might take from me temptation (namely that I might in freedom perform the work which He had ordered me). And He said unto me: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness [3]).

Therefore [4]), my Lord, if this is thy will, and our childish nature so much needs a master who rules and exhorts that even a man who is so fond of thy love as I am and so zea-

1) Luke 11, 8. 2) Luke 18, 1. 3) 2 Corinthians 12, 7 sqq.
4) The following passage is put into the mouth of Paul.

lous a follower of good that he does not see the world at all because of his drunkenness in thee, so that thou hast brought me so far as to see revelations and visions which a fleshly tongue is not allowed to interpret, and to hear the sound of the service of the spiritual orders, so that I am deemed worthy of sight full of spiritual sanctities, that such a man as I with all this is not able to guard his own person, I who am a man perfect in Christ, — because there is still something which because of its subtleness resists the power of my knowledge — I that possess the mind of Christ — [if all this be so] then, my Lord, I rejoice at my illnesses, at troubles, reclusions, bonds, compulsions, on the part of nature or on the part of natural beings, or on the part of the fiend of nature.

Joyfully, therefore, I will bear my illnesses, namely my temptations, which the power of Christ brings upon me. If, with all these, I still require the rod of temptations in order
505 to augment thy influence upon me and that I may be guarded by thy presence, I known that there is none whom thou lovest better than me.

And because thou hast made me greater than many others and hast not given to any of my fellow Apostles what thou hast given to me — namely to know the glorifications of thy powers; and because thou hast called me an elect vessel and hast entrusted me with the guardianship of thy love; because of all these and that I know that the preaching of thy gospel has made excellent progress, while I am free from the bonds of temptations on account of all these things I know that thou wouldst have given men freedom, if this were profitable to me. But thou hast not wished that I should be without trouble and without care in this world; and thou werst not anxious to promote the preaching of thy gospel to the same degree as thou werst anxious that I should profit by my temptations, and my soul be kept healthy with thee.

Therefore, o thou who art discriminating, if the gift of the temptations be so great that a man, even if he be as exalted and advanced in spiritual state as Paul's degree was, still requires fear and watchfulness and gathers profit by meeting temptations, who then can reach a place of security in the world of mortality full of robbers, and receive stability[1]) (which

1) ܠܐ ܡܨܛܠܝܢܘܬܐ

was not given to the holy angels, lest they should become perfect before us), thus receiving before all people, — spiritual and bodily ones — such a gift that, according to his wish, he should be without varying states at all, without a temptation even approaching to his deliberations?

The order of this world, according to the conception of all
506 holy writings, is this, that even if we received a thousand blows every day, our mind would not become humble and we would desist from the course in the arena; but that on account of one small cause, we gain the victory possibly and win our crown. This world is an arena and a running place. And this time is a time of struggle. And the time and the place of the struggle are not subject to a law. This means: the King does not set a terminus to his warriors, till the struggle is ended and all the world is gathered within the gate of the king of kings and it is examined there who has been constant in the war and has not been defeated, and who has taken to flight. How often will it happen that a man who was good for nothing and constantly beaten and thrown down because of his want of training, and who was always in a state of weakness, will snatch the banner from the hand of the valiant warriors and make his name famous above that of the doughty ones, the able and knowing battle-troops, and receive the crown and gifts which are honoured by all his fellows.

Nobody, therefore, should give way to despondency. Only: he should not despise prayer, nor neglect to ask help from our Lord. And let us take this to heart, that, as long as we are in this world and dwelling in this body, even if we are lifted up unto the vault of heaven, it is not possible to be free from toil and injury and care. This is the sum of it all. Pardon me. What exceeds this is superfluous.

LXXIV

507 ON THE DISCRIMINATION OF VIRTUES AND THE SCOPE OF THE WHOLE COURSE AND THE GREATNESS OF THE LOVE UNTO MANKIND AND THE SPIRITUAL AIM WHICH IT REACHES IN ALL THE SAINTS CREATING WITHIN THEM A DIVINE LIKENESS BY THE RICH LOVE WHICH HE POURS OUT UPON MANKIND

The scope of the whole course consists in these three: Repentance, purity and perfection. What is repentance? To desist from former [sins] and to suffer on account of them. And what is the sum of purity? A heart full of mercy unto the whole created nature. And what is perfection? Depth of humility, namely giving up all visible and invisible things. Visible things: all that which is sensible. In visible things: all thinking about them. Another time the same Father was asked: What is repentance? He answered: A broken heart. And what is humility? He replied: Embracing a voluntary mortification regarding all things. And what is a merciful heart? He replied: The burning of the heart unto the whole creation, man, fowls and beasts, demons and whatever exists; so that by the recollection and the sight of them the eyes shed tears on account of the force of mercy which moves the heart by great compassion. Then the heart becomes weak [1]) and it is not able to bear hearing or examining injury or any insignificant suffering of anything in the creation. And therefore even in behalf of the irrational beings and the enemies of truth and even in behalf of those who do harm to it, at all times he
508 offers prayers with tears that they may be guarded and strengthened; even in behalf of the kinds of reptiles, on account of his great compassion which is poured out in his heart without measure, after the example of God.

And what is prayer? He replied: The mind's being free from all that is earthly and the heart's turning its gaze completely towards the desire of future hope. Who deviates from this, is as one who sows in his furrow mixed seed and as one who ploughs with ox and ass together.

1) lit.: small

How is humility acquired? He replied: By constant recollection of trespasses, by expectation of near death, by dressing meanly, by always choosing the lowest place and by always undertaking low and humble work, without compulsion, by constant silence, by disliking crowded meetings, by being unknown and disregarded, by choosing distinctly one occupation, by hating intercourse with other persons, by disliking profits. All his qualities are based upon these.

And his mind must be exalted above vituperating and reproaching anyone and above zealotism. And his hand shall not be against all. Nor the hand of all with him. But he shall be a solitary, only occupying himself with his own things, and lonely. And he shall not take upon himself the care of any one in the world except himself. In short: abiding abroad and poverty and lonely dwelling give birth to humility and purify the heart. As to those who have reached perfection, their token is, that if ten times every day they are delivered to burning for the sake of the love of mankind, they are not
509 saturated with it. As also Moses said to God: If thou wilt not pardon the children of Israel, blot me out of thy book which thou hast written [1]). And as also the blessed Paul said [2]): I could desire to be removed afar from Christ [3]), if thereby the children of Israel would come near to the faith of life. And if it be thus that it is possible that they, for this reason, will believe in Christ and will come to life everlasting and will not be alienated from the living God. Then, as is written: I rejoice in my sufferings for you, o peoples [3]). Even so the other Apostles have undergone all kinds of death, for the sake of the love of the life of mankind. The sum of all is God, the Lord of all, who from love of His creatures, has delivered His son to death on the cross. For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son for it [4]). Not that He was not able to save us in another way, but in this way it was possible to show us His abundant love abundantly, namely by bringing us near to Him by the death of His son. If He had anything more dear to Him, He would have given it us, in order that by it our race might be His. And out of His great love He did not even choose to urge our freedom by compulsion, though He was able to do so. But His aim was, that

1) Cf. Exodus 32, 32 2) The text has same words which give no sense here and are wanting in the Greek translation. 3) Cf. Col. 1, 24 4) Cf. John 3, 16.

we should come near to Him by the love of our mind.

And our Lord obeyed His father out of love unto us, taking upon Him scorn and suffering joyfully, as Scripture says: Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame[1]. Therefore our Lord said in the night in which He was betrayed: This is my body which is given for the salvation of the world unto life. And this is my blood which is shed for all for the remission of sins[2]. In behalf of them I offer myself.

And so all the saints have reached this accomplishment when they became perfect, so that they resembled God in effusion of love and compassion for mankind. And they asked for themselves as a token of their resembling God, that they should be perfect in the love of their fellows. So did also the solitary Fathers, that they might bear in themselves constantly this likeness full of the life of Christ, the Lord of the Universe.

The blessed Antonius thought that he never could do anything so useful to himself as that which was profitable to his neighbour, in the opinion that the profit of his neighbour was his excellent service. Analogous is a saying concerning the blessed Agathon: ‚I wished that I could find a leper, and give him my body and take his'. Doest thou see the perfect love? Even in outward things he could not bear to displease his neighbour rather than himself. He possessed namely a knife, which a brother saw and liked it. And he did not allow him to leave his cell till he had taken it. And when he possessed a thing and saw some one who wanted it, he did not lay any further claim to it.

What do I mean by these things [which include] that many of them have given their bodies even to the beasts and the sword and the fire on behalf of their neighbours? It is not possible that a man should reach this degree of love, with the exception of that one who secretly perceives his faith. And it is not possible that those who love this world, should acquire the love of mankind. When a man has acquired love, he is clad with God at the same time. He that has put on God, never can be persuaded to acquire any other thing except Him, but he puts off his body even. And if he is clad with the world or with love of his life, these will not allow

1) Hebr. 12, 2 2) Cf. Matth. 26, 26, 28

him to put on God. For he is witness: he that does not forsake and hate all, even himself, cannot be my disciple[1]). Not only that he should leave them, but that he should ever hate them. And if he cannot be a disciple, how can He dwell in him?

The interrogator. How is it that the service of hope is so delightful, and its labours so few and its work so easy to the soul?

The Father. This is because it excites the natural longing in the soul and gives them this cup to drink and makes them drunk. And from this moment they nevermore perceive fatigue but become apathetic against troubles. And during the whole of their course it is to them as if they were moving in the
512 air without bodily motion, without seeing anything of the difficulty of the road or the streams and hills that are before them; but the crooked becomes to them straight and rough places plain[2]), because they always see the bosom of their Father, and all those things which are far and invisible it makes to them clear in themselves, so that they gaze at them mysteriously with the hidden eye of faith. For all the parts of the soul become hot as by fire, on account of the expectation of those things which, though far, become as near; for towards them is tended the whole direction of their deliberations; and they hasten to know when they will reach [their aim] and when they will approach unto every single virtue by practice. They do not practice them partly, but all of them together, at the same time. For they do not take their course along the king's way, as the generality of men, but choose short paths along which a few heroes move, who easily reach the Apartment. For hope warms them as with fire, and they cannot pause in their incessant course, on account of their joy. And to them happens as in the word of Jeremia: I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones[3]). Such is the recollection of God in the heart of those who move in the expectation of the promise. Short
513 paths I call the concise virtues, because in them there is no winding nor the long space of many ways of discipline leading from here to there, nor place nor time nor distraction. But they stand on the way and accomplish it at once.

1) Cf. Luke 14, 33 2) Isaia 40, 4 3) Jeremia 20, 9

The interrogator. Wat is apathy?

The Father answers. Apathy is not [the state] that does not perceive the affections, but that which does not accept them, so that on account of the many virtues possessed, manifest and hidden ones, the affections have become weak and cannot easily assail the soul. Neither does the spirit want to look at them every time, because at all times its emotion is filled with meditation and intercourse with excellent thoughts, which move with insight in the mind. And when an affection is beginning to move, the spirit at once hastens away from it through some insight which it perceives in the mind, and the affection remains idle. As also the blessed Euagrius says: the mind which by the grace of God performs works of excellence and approaches unto knowledge, perceives little of the foolish part of the soul. For its knowledge drags it on high and alienates it to all things in the world; this happens also because, on account of their purity, their mind has become subtle and light and swift. Further the mind is purified by asceticism, because the body is desiccated, and also in consequence of the fulness of solitude and the long space of time passed in it. Therefore it swiftly alights on several things towards which
514 their contemplation draws them in ecstasy. Therefore they are rich in contemplation, and are never in want of abundant insight in their spirit, apart from the fact, that the Spirit ripens its fruits in them. And in the course of time also the eye loses sight of the recollections that come from the heart and which stir the affections in the soul and are a principal power of Satan. But when the soul does not associate with the affections by meditating upon them — because it is continually occupied by other care — the power of their nails cannot take hold of the soul's spiritual senses.

The interrogator: What are the characteristics of humility?

The Father answers: As presumption dissipates the soul by phantastic distraction on account of the power inciting it to fly round the whole creation in the cloud of its deliberations, so humility is the power which concentrates the soul's being by the peace of its deliberations and the reclusion of the soul within its self. And as the soul is unknown and invisible to the fleshly eye, so the humble is unknown amongst mankind. And as the soul in the body is hidden from sight and from mingling with every man, so the truly humble not

only does not desire to be seen and known among mankind, because of his being hidden and recluded from all, but it is even his desire — if possible — to be shut off from his soul and to be within himself in total quiet and rest of his emotions and senses, as something that does not exist in the
515 creation and has not come into existence and is not at all, so that he does not even wish for himself to be known and perceived. And as long as he is hidden and shut off from the world, he is wholly with his Lord.

The humble is never pleased to see crowds and gatherings of people, noise and rumour, nor riches and finery, nor the luxury which is a consequence of them, nor speech and intercourse, rumour and distraction of the senses. But above all he chooses concentration and reclusion with himself alone, to be quiet and shut off and lonely and left to himself in a solitary place void of all beings and separated from the whole creation. And in every respect smallness and limitation and want and poverty is beloved by him. And he is not occupied with many things and labours, but at all times he is satisfied and without care, without troublesome mingling with worldly things, so that his deliberations do not wander from his self, because he knows that if he alights upon many things it is not possible for him to remain without confused emotions. For many practices cause many cares. And many cares are a gathering-point of varied thoughts and deliberations. Then he would have to give up his being exalted above the care of earthly things, in peace of deliberations — except for the small necessary things which are inevitable — with a spirit occupied with a single care, the emotions being in a state of peace. And then necessary things would not allow him to keep silent
516 and so he would be injured and would cause injury. Thus there would be opened a gate for the affections and discriminating quiet would disappear, humility would flee, the gate of salvation would be shut. And because of all this, he continually keeps his soul away from the many things, and at all times thou findest him quiet and at rest and humble and peaceful.

In the humble there is never violence nor terror nor confusion, nor hot nor quick emotions. But at all times he abides in rest. If heaven should fall on the earth, the humble would not be moved.

Not every one who is quiet, is humble. But every one who

is humble is also quiet. There does not exist one who is humble without being submissive. Those who are submissive without being humble are found in large numbers. This is the meek and humble concerning whom our Lord has said: Learn of me, that I am meak and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls [1]). The humble is content at all times, because there is nothing which moves his spirit. As it is not possible for a man to move a mountain, so the spirit of the humble is unmoved, if it is possible to say so. And perhaps it is not even foolish to say that even the humble does not belong to this world, because he is not destroyed nor moved by distresses: even [emotions] of joy cause ecstasy and effusion to him. But all his joy and true exultation is in the things of his Lord.

Connected with humility are patience, a concentrated self
517 — which is [real] humility — a low voice, little speech, self-contempt, mean clothes, a modest gait, bashful looks, effusion of mercy, easily flowing tears, a lonely soul, a broken heart, the not being moved by anger, absence of distraction of the senses, moderate wishes, moderate wants in every respect, willingness to bear, patience, intrepidity, manliness of heart born from hatred of temporal life, endurance of temptations, few emotions which are not swift, extinguished deliberations, keeping of secrets, chastity, bashfulness, modesty, and above all: continual silence, continual having recourse to ignorance. The humble is never approached by necessity which makes him confused. The humble, even when he is alone, is shameful for his soul.

I wonder whether there exists a truly humble man, who ventures to pray to God when he approaches unto prayer, or who is worthy of this, or of asking Him anything, or who knows what he shall pray. But when all his emotions are quiet and he only hopes for mercy, [being uncertain] which order will be given concerning himself by the adorable Majesty; when his face is bent towards the earth and the inner gaze of the heart lifted up towards the door of the holy of holies of the Highest, the cloud of whose dwelling-place blinds the eyes of the Seraphs, and whose splendour terrifies the legions of their orders, when silence lies upon all their classes and

1) Matthew 11, 29

518 they expect the rising of mysteries from the domain of invisible things, in an airless womb, with emotions without voice, with unbodily senses, with apperception without resemblance[1]), without seeing the revelations which reach them, the vehemence of their emotions being too weak to endure the waves of His mysteries; then he does not venture to say anything, but: According to thy will, my Lord.

These things so far I have endeavoured to write to thee in plain words, which the spirit could attain without scrutiny on account of their manifest sense; things by the reading of which alone the mind forgets the ways and the dealings of this world and its fleshly life, migrating then with the spirit unto its true and profitable world. [I have written this], asking thy love that, when thou comest in contact with these mysteries, thou shalt not leave them without profit, so that they should be found with thee to be dead sentences; lest it should happen to thee as it happened to those who were invited to the spiritual meal but excused themselves. Behold, the table is prepared, spiritual ideas are ranged upon it, and all delightful things are ready; and the bridegroom expects that we shall enter and rejoice with him. Let us, therefore, not excuse ourselves, lest there be said to us also the word that was said concerning them. What then? Verily, I say unto you, that none of those invited, shall eat from my meal.

LXXV

519 ON HIDDEN STATES AND THE POWERS AND INFLUENCES WHICH ARE IN THEM

This may be taken for true by thee, that the practice of marvellous things, and the foreseeing of future things, and temptations, and rest from strife, and victory over every one of the affections, and the presence of every one of the vritues, and consolation, for a certain time, from grace, and purity of prayer, and warmth of spirit, and spiritual joy, and all the other things with which a man fatigues himself for a certain time, with a good intention and a mournful heart — that in

1) The: in the text to be placed after ܐܝܟܢܐ

all these God will condescend to accomplish man's will at any time. And when He sees his intention and longing He grants him his wish and satisfies him.

As to the mysteries which belong to the spirit, namely the emotions during spiritual prayer, and the entering of the mind behind the curtain of the holy of holies, and the apperception of the indestructible inheritance — if a man does not pay their duty, God is not willing to grant them, even if the whole creation should beseech in behalf of him. Their duty is purity of the soul. When a man has reached purity from the affections, what no eye has seen and no ear has heard and what has not entered into the heart of man to ask in prayer, is revealed to him by purity, which during no moment ceases from mysteries and spiritual visions. And what the force of
520 spring is wont to work unto the nature of the earth, this grace works unto the soul by purity. The power of spring makes even the smallest roots in the valleys bud, warming the earth as fire does the cauldron, so that it sends forth the treasures of the plants which God has laid in the earth's nature, to the gladness of the creation and to His glory.

So grace makes manifest all the glory which God has hidden in the nature of the soul showing the soul this glory and making it glad because of its own beauty. So that when it sees the great and unspeakable treasures which God has laid in it and which were hidden from it by the defiled mantle of affections and ignorance, but which now that it has torn asunder the garment of the affections, He has shown to it — it is captured on account of its gladness by His love and turns its back on earthly things.

Moreover it does not remember the body which hid its own beauties from its sight. Then it sees heavenly beauties in itself as the exact mirror which by its great purity shows the beauty of faces. Holiness suits those who are holy. All excellence whatever and all service by which righteousness is accomplished, may be performed and acquired and accomplished without solitude, but apathy and purity cannot be acquired without solitude.

LXXVI

521 ## SHORT SAYINGS

The blessed Paul teaches us saying: Put off the old man and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness [1]).

He does not say: Put on the new man over the old man. For he knows that this is not possible. Look, how wisely he gives his order. He does not say: Put on the new man who is renewed by the knowledge of God, but he says, first put off this, and then put on the new. Also he says definitely in another place: Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither does corruption inherit incorruption [2]). By incorruption he means the knowledge of the other world. By corruption and flesh and blood he designates the corruptible affections of soul and body, which have the place of their motion in the fleshly mind. Purity he calls the new man, and by the kingdom of God he means the exalted and intelligible contemplation of the blessed motions of the essential rays into which the saintly soul only is allowed to enter when its incorruptible emotions are lifted up above corruption and flesh and blood.

If [3]) the apple of thy soul's eye has not been purified, do not venture to look at the sun, lest thou be bereaved of thy usual visual power and thou be thrown into one of those intel-
522 ligible places which are Tartarus and a type of Hell, namely darkness without God, whither those who with the impulses of their mind leave nature, wander by the cognitive nature which they possess. Therefore he that ventured to go to the banquet in sordid garments, was ordered to be thrown out into that outer darkness. By the banquet is designated the sight of spiritual knowledge. The institutions in it are the manifold divine mysteries, full of joy and exultation and delight of the soul. The garment of the banquet he calls the mantle of purity; the sordid garments the emotions of the affections in the soul which are defiled, the outer darkness, the state with-

1) Cf. Ephes. 4, 22; 24 2) 1 Cor. 15, 50
3) The following passage occurs also p. 16 sq. Cf. the Introduction.

out any delight of true knowledge and communion with God. He that is clad with such garments and ventures to think phantastically with his intellect on the heights of God and to introduce and to settle his soul within the spiritual contemplations of that holy banquet which is made to dawn in the pure only, and who, partaking only of the delight of the affections, wishes to mingle in the delight of that banquet — is suddenly overwhelmed, as it were by some hallucination, and expelled thence unto the place without rays, which is called Hell and destruction, which is ignorance and oblivion of God.

For it has been said that the things of God come of their own, if there is a pure and undefiled place. That they come of their own, means that it naturally belongs to purity that heavenly light shines in it, without investigation and labour
523 on our part. For in the pure heart, the new heaven is stamped; of which the sight is light and the room is spiritual. As also in another place it is said: As the magnet-stone has the natural faculty to attract atoms of iron, so has spiritual knowledge [the faculty to attract] the pure heart.

Though it has been handed down rightly by the true ones that no mind is absolutely steadfast against the allurements of the affections in this life, yet I say with confidence without being afraid of the truth of experience, that he who is clad with the garment of mourning in his mind, is not only invincible against the allurements of the effections, but a hero in the war against them and a victor, because they absolutely do not venture to show themselves with the intention of strife, nor do they even venture to appear from afar where there is a mourning soul which has made itself a wailing-place with various lamentations on account of its sins. As it has been said by the blessed Jacob: It makes its abode in the grave, till it meets the beloved Joseph. Where there is the bitterness of mourning, I do not believe that the above-mentioned pleasure of the affections is admitted.

But I say that in watchfulness lies this service and confidence, exalted above fear. He that is constantly in a state of mourning because of his fear — as he does not know what the end of his course will be — is more excellent than he that is con-
524 stantly in the way of gladness, because he perceives the hope of his service.

O thou whose town is vanquished by inward affections, put

on the armour of mourning and persecute them and save thy soul from their hands. For always invincible is this weapon and that of confidence, and tried by the true ones.

LXXVII

THIS CHAPTER IS FULL OF LIFE

O thou wretched man, wishest thou to find life? Take faith and humility in order to find by them mercy and help and consolation from God, and protection secretly and openly. Desirest thou to acquire these, which are the fountain of life? Put on sincerity, from the beginning. In sincerity walk before God, and not in knowledge. Sincerity is combined with faith; subtlety and the reflections of knowledge, with presumptuous thoughts; presumptuous thoughts, with being removed from God.

When thou liest before God in prayer, then be in thy consideration as a an ant and as the reptiles of the earth and as the beetle. And stammer as a villager and speak not before Him with knowledge. With a childlike mind approach unto God and walk before Him, that thou mayest be worthy of the paternal care which fathers entertain in behalf of their young children.

525 It has been said: The Lord guards the children. A child may approach a serpent and take it at its neck; and the animal will not bite. A child may go naked during the whole winter. And while others are clad and covered — yet the cold penetrates all their members — he sits down naked in the day of frost and ice, without suffering, because the body of their childhood is covered by a different, invisible garment, by that hidden care which guards the frail members of childhood, lest injury from any side approach them. Doest thou now believe that there is a secret care in behalf of the tender body which is especially liable to all kinds of injuries on account of its tenderness and the weakness of its joints, so that it is guarded from obnoxious influences so that they do not cause suffering? For the Lord guards the child. Thou must not only apply this and believe it in the case of children, but also in the case of those who, being wise in the world, leave their knowledge, and relying upon that wisdom which is

all-sufficient become children by their own will. Then they learn wisdom, which is not to be learnt by labours of exercise.

Also the blessed Apostle, who was wise in divine things, has beautifully said in an admonition: If any man seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise [1]). But beseech God, that He may grant thee to reach the degree of faith. If thou perceivest the delight of faith in thy soul, it is not difficult for me to say that there is nothing further which withholds it from Christ. And it is not difficult
526 for it to be always captivated and not to perceive earthly things but to forget this weak world and the recollection of its things. On behalf of this pray without dejection; and ask it with tears and beseech fervently; and supplicate with great earnestness, till thou hast received it. Further no fatigue will be necessary.

Thou wilt be deemed worthy of this, if beforehand thou compellest thy soul to cast thy care on God, in faith, and so thou wilt change thy care for His care. Then, when He sees that in utter serenity of spirit thou art willed to believe God in things which concern thee and that thou compellest thy soul to confide in God more than in thyself, that power with which thou art not acquainted, will take hold of thee, so that thou wilt be affected in an apperceptible way by the power which works in thee, no room being left for doubt.

By this power which they perceived, many went into the fire without fear, and walked on water without thinking of the possibility that they could be drowned in it, because faith strengthened the senses of their soul so that it felt an inward conviction that resolution could not be weakened nor look on terrible things except with a gaze exalted bove the senses.

Take care not to think at all, that spiritual knowledge can be received by psychic knowledge. It is not only that spiritual knowledge cannot be received by psychic knowledge, but it is even impossible that those who zealously try to acquire training in psychic knowledge should be deemed worthy to
527 perceive spiritual knowledge. And if any of them should desire to approach unto spiritual knowledge, before having denied psychic knowledge and all its subtle orders and intricacies and before having reached childhood of spirit — it will not be

1) 1 Cor. 3, 18

possible for him to approach even a little way towards it. But its customs and perverted impulses become to him many hindrances, before he gradually forgets them.

Spiritual knowledge is simple, not illuminated by psychic deliberations. Before the mind has been freed from manifold deliberations and has reached the unified simplicity of purity, it is not able to perceive spiritual things.

This order of knowledge, consisting therein that man here already perceives the delight of the life of the world to be, rejects much deliberation. And psychic knowledge is not able, apart from the gatherings of many deliberations, to know anything which is received by serenity of spirit. And the word of our Lord is not denied: Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven [1]). Indeed, many are those who do not reach this innocence; but on account of their beautiful works a portion is kept for them with our Lord in the kingdom of heaven, as can be recognized from the understanding of the blessings which He especially pronounced in His gospel. In these blessings He has touched a variety of ways of behaviour [from which it appears] that for every man who walks to Him, in whatever measure on whatever way, the gate of the kingdom of heaven is open. But the word 'Except ye be converted
528 and become as little children' means that here man perceives the delight of the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is said to be spiritual contemplation. And this is not found by the labours of the deliberations, but it is tasted by grace. And before a man has become pure, he is not able even to hear. Because it is not acquired by learning. If thou reachest purity, my son, which is acquired through the faith of the heart and by reclusion from men, and thou forgettest the knowledge of this world and doest not perceive it, then [spiritual contemplation] suddenly is found within thee, without inquiring after it. Erect a pillar and pour oil upon it [2]), and thou wilt find thy treasure within thee.

If, however, thou art entangled in the snares of psychic knowledge, I have no objection to say that it will be easier to thee to escape from iron bonds than from it. And thou wilt never be far from the snares of seduction, and thou wilt

1) Matth. 18, 3. 2) Cf. Gen. 28, 18.

never be able to find and to have freedom of speech and confidence unto our Lord. And at all times thou wilt walk on the edge of the sword and thou wilt not be able absolutely to be without suffering [1].

Take refuge with weakness and sincereness, that thou mayest live beautifully before God, and that thou mayest be without fear. For as the shadow follows the bodies, so does mercy follow humility. Therefore, if thou wishest to be connected with these,
529 do not give room any-how to weak deliberations. If all injuries and evils and dangers surround thee and make thee fear, do not care to look at them or to think of them. If once thou believest that God is able to guard and to govern thee, and if thou followest him, then do not further care for anything like these. But say to thyself: All-sufficient is He to whom thou hast once entrusted thyself. I am not near [to anything], but He knows it.

Then thou wilt see indeed the wonders of God, namely how near His salvation always is to those who fear Him; and that His care surrounds them, though it is invisible. And though the guardian which is with thee is invisible to the bodily eyes, yet thou shalt not doubt his existence. Sometimes he reveals himself also to the bodily eyes, for the sake of thy confirmation. But when man has thrown away all visible help and human hope and clings to God in faith and with a clear heart, then at once grace will cling to him and reveal in him its force by various [acts of] help. At first it shows its help in manifest things, also in bodily ones, by its care of him, in order that by these things he may the better be able to perceive the power which is in God's care of him, and that by insight in manifest things he may become confirmed in hidden ones, as is becoming to his childlike mind and his lack of training. How then?

It is to be compared with this, for instance, that a man's want is prepared for him without labour, without his bestowing care on it. So grace causes him to escape many accidents
530 which often come near him and which are full of danger. And while he has no anxiety before them because he does not perceive them, grace disposes of them in a very wonderful way, as also the other things which suddenly assail him, without his thinking how often injury to the soul and also to the

1) Affection?

body may proceed from them. And it preserves him against them, as a nurse who gives him shade and spreads her wings over her sons, that no harm may approach unto them. And at the same time it causes him to perceive that which happened, showing him what threatened to destroy him, by the yees of the body, and the actual help of God, in a clear way; and the dissolution of his life which was near and from which God saved him.

So [grace] instructs him, also in hidden things. And it reveals to him the ambushes of thoughts and of deliberations difficult to understand. So he will easily attain to their understanding and their mutual relation and seduction, which is related to which, and how one is born from the other and destroys the soul. And the whole ambush of the demons is laid open before him, and the cover of their deliberations, and what is related to every one of them.

And [grace] provides him with insight, so that he understands what will happen. Then in his sincereness dawns a hidden light so that he perceives everything and the force of the emotions of subtle deliberations. It shows him as it were with its finger — if he did not know this — what is going to happen to him. And then this is born in him, that he asks from his governor, in prayer, all things small and great.

531 And when grace, by all these things, has confirmed his mind in confidence on God, then it begins to introduce him gradually into temptations. And it admits unto him those temptations the difficulty of which his degree is able to bear. And by such a temptation it adduces unto him its help in an apperceptible way, in order to strengthen his courage, till, gradually, he acquires training and wisdom and despises his enemies through confidence in God.

For it is impossible for a man, without these, to become prudent in spiritual struggles and to recognize his governor and to perceive his God, and to become secretly confirmed in his hope, by the force which he has received personally through experience. And as often as [grace] sees that the deliberation of presumption begins to move somewhat in him, and that he begins to think great things of himself, it allows the temptations to become strong and powerful against him, so that he recognizes his weakness and flees and seeks refuge with God in humility.

By these things man reaches the degree of perfect man, through

faith and hope in the son of God to whom he is lifted up in love. For in a wonderful manner God's help unto man is recognized when he is surrounded by circumstances full of despair, and God shows there His power by delivering him from them. Never has man experienced the divine power in rest and comfort, and never has He shown His action in an apperceptible manner except in a lonely place or in the desert or in places not visited by men and free from the disturbance of their habitation.

532 Be not astonished if, when thou beginnest [to practice] excellence, severe troubles rise against these from all sides. For excellence is not to be deemed to involve that its practice is not combined with difficulty and labours. Excellence has received its denomination from this, says the holy Euagrius. Usually difficulties make front against this alertness, and excellence is to be rejected when it is combined with comfort, says the blessed Marcus, the solitary.

All excellence whatever, is called the cross, because it accomplishes the order of the spirit. For all those who desire in the fear of God to live in Jesus Christ, are assailed by troubles. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Whoever would save his life in comfort, loses it; and who gives up his life for my sake, finds it[1]). Therefore our Lord has placed before thee the cross, that thou mightest pronounce death on thy soul and thereupon cause it to follow Him.

There is nothing so strong as despair. It does not know how it can be defeated by anything belonging to those of the right or to those of the left hand. When a man in his mind has given up his life, none is more courageous than he is, and there is no enemy who is able to meet him, and there is no trouble the fame of which can weaken his mind. For any trouble whatever is inferior to death, and he has resolved to take death upon himself.

533 If in every place and in every work and at all times concerning all things which thou art going to perform thou placest labour and pain as an example for the mind, thou wilt not only be found always courageous and undaunted to thwart all reputed difficulty, and by the vigour of the deliberations to put timidity to flight which usually rises therefrom that deli-

1) Matth. 16, 24

berations look for comfort, but also all hard and difficult things which meet thee will seem to thee easy and light.

How often thy will is thwarted by what thou expectest, though perhaps these things do not reach thee. For thou knowest that the expectation of comfort always withholds men from great profit and from excellent good, so that even those who live in the world with their fleshly dealings cannot accomplish their wish if they do not resolve in their mind to bear difficulties. And because experience is witness to this, persuasion with words is not necessary. And in all preceding generations till now there is nothing which makes men despair of victories and checks them from exellent practice and which makes them — to say it in one word — despise to enter into the kingdom, as the expectation of the small comfort which is near. And not only this, but many times this aspect is the cause of severe accidents and hard temptations to every man whose mind is directed towards it and whose deliberations move unto it;
534 because his governor is the will of desire. Who does not know that also the bird by the aspect of comfort draws near the snare? Perhaps our knowledge, as compared to that of a bird, is much inferior, concerning the hidden things and the accidents which are hidden in things and actions and places and various things. And also Satan, from the beginning, tries to ensnare us by promises and the prospect of comforts.

Now that my mind is occupied with the subject of desire, by the words I have written, I have erred away from the scope which I had indicated above, viz. that at all times we must place the aspect of troubles before our mind, in all that we wish to begin in the path of our Lord, so that it reach its end duly.

How many times, when a man wishes to begin some work for the Lord, he asks whether there is comfort in the thing, or whether it is possible to accomplish it easily, without labour, or whether there is any thing in it to trouble the body. Are not above and beneath names of comfort? What doest thou say, o man? Doest thou wish to ascend unto heaven and to receive the Kingdom which is there and communion with God and spiritual comforts and that blessedness and mingling with the angels, and immortal life? And doest thou ask whether there is trouble in this way? How astonishing are those who desire the things of this world and the riches which are to be destroyed and the dominion which will be dissolved. They

walk on the difficult waves of the sea; and they tread frightful ways; they bear a long course full of labours and troubles,
535 and other mournful things which men are wont to perform for the sake of their desire; and they do not deliberate at all whether there is labour in the matter or vexation in what they wish to do; whereas we always inquire after comforts.

If we always in our mind take upon us the way of crucifixion and always comply with the crucifixion, what difficulty then should not be easier than it? Does there exist any one at all who is not acquainted with this, that no man has ever won a victory in battle and received a perishable crown, or has administered divine actions, or has succeeded in any of the glorious things of excellence, or has got the desire of his will even in things not laudable, without having undertaken first labours and troubles or without having pushed away alluring thoughts of comfort that gave birth to dejection and pusillanimity and caused relaxation in all things? But when the mind is zealous in behalf of excellence, the outward senses — smell, touch, hearing, sight and taste — do not know what it means to be vanquished by the severe shocks caused by foreign influences lying outside the course and dominion of the power of nature.

When anger influences [a man] naturally, then bodily life appears more despicable than dung. When however the heart is spiritually zealous, the body does not suffer by troubles, nor does it shrink from terrible things. But the mind faces all temptations being like diamond in its endurance.

536 Let us also be zealous with a spiritual zeal for the sake of the will of Jesus, then all dejection which causes relaxation in the mind will be driven away from us. For zeal causes courage and firmness of soul and soundness of body. What power is there in the demons when the soul moves its zeal against them with natural vigour?

Resolution too is said to be the offspring of zeal. And all immoveable vigour which is born in the soul when it sets its powers to work, is implanted in it by zeal. Also the crowns of confessorship which the victorious martyrs receive on account of their endurance are born by this twofold influence of zeal and resolution which have their origin in the power of natural anger, [and thus the martyrs] become apathetic against the vehement suffering in vexations.

LXXVIII

ON THE PROFIT [ARISING] FROM THE FLIGHT FROM THE WORLD THE METHOD OF WHICH HAS BEEN THOUGHT OUT BY THE FATHERS THROUGH PRUDENT EXAMINATION

Strong indeed and difficult and very hard is the struggle which arises when things are near. And though a man may be excellent and vigorous, when things causing battles and strife are near, fear clings to him. Then he falls easier than when Satan personally meets him in battle. For when a man
537 is not far from those things which the heart is afraid of, the fiend has constantly the opportunity [to assail him]. And if it happens that he sleeps a while, the fiend can easily destroy him. For there the body is in danger of being injured, at any rate it has to be kept afar from sin. But here it is the soul that receives an invisible blow and it cannot fatigue the fiend so that he gives up fighting against it. For these things are of themselves able to move against it the disturbance of struggle at any time. And willingly it lets itself be captivated by them, without any one arousing strife against it from without. But the soul is in strife with itself through the allurements of those things which are arranged before the senses of the body, as has been said somewhere; for as soon as the soul is captivated by the injurious meetings with the world, these meetings become stumbling-blocks to it; or, as has also been said: The soul is naturally vanquished, when it meets those things.

Therefore, because the ancient saints who have walked in these ways knew that the mind is not always healthy so as to be able to remain in one attitude, without deviation, and vigilant, because there is a time that the soul becomes enveloped in darkness without being able to look at those things which cause injury — they have examined prudently and [resolved to] put on renunciation, as a weapon. For it frees from many struggles, as has been written. For some have escaped from sins, through their poverty and have migrated towards the desert where there is nothing to cause affections,

so that, when a time comes when they are weak, nothing is found to give occasion to fall.

538 I say: anger and desire and rancour and glory and the like are slight, because of the desert, and by it [those solitaries] were protected as by an invincible tower. Then every one of them was able to accomplish his strife in solitude, there where the senses found no support so as to become fiends by injurious meetings. Better for us is death in our struggle, than life with falling.

LXXIX

HOW THE HIDDEN IMPULSES VARY ALONG WITH THE VARIATION OF OUTWARD BEHAVIOUR

As long as a man clings to renunciation [the thought of] departure from this life is continually alive in his mind. And every hour he meditates on the life after resurrection, contriving to prepare what is necessary for that state. And a contempt for all honour and comfort of the body is sown in his mind, and the thought of the baseness of the world moves in him at all times. And he is courageous and always possesses the heart of a hero in all fear and danger threatening death. For he is not afraid even of death, because he perpetually looks at it very near from a short distance and expects it. And his care is cast on God, with full, undoubting confidence. And when troubles oppose him, he, as a man that knows assuredly that they will prepare crowns for him, bears them with perfect joy, while his soul rejoices and exults when receiving
539 them. For he knows that it is God who sends them, because of the profits of things which remain unknown, in the hidden acts of providence. But when it happens that on account of some cause some transitory thing falls to his lot by the action of him that cunningly devises all evils, at once love of the body begins to stir in his soul and he thinks of a long life and deliberations connected with bodily comfort germinate in him every moment. But, if possible, he witholds his body from being hurt by anything. And he contrives all things which can be utilized for the comfort of the body, and becomes wanting in that freedom which is not subject to any deliberation of fear, and consequently bestows his care and deliberation on

all these things, namely the emotions that cause fear and the things that produce terror. For the courage of the heart has been taken away from him, which he possessed in his soul while he was exalted above the world by his renunciation. And now that he has become an inheritor of the world, in accordance with the quantity of his possession he also has received fear for the law and the provision allotted to him by God.

For the side to the service of which we prepare our members, is that to which we become servants with a submission involving total fear, according to the word of the Apostle [1].

Anterior to all affections is self-love. Anterior to all virtues is that a man despise comforts. He that feeds his body with comforts, is troubled in the place of peace. He that indulges in luxury in his youth, will become a slave and sigh at the end.

540 As it is impossible that he, whose head is bound within the dark [2] bosom of the water, should smell the subtle air which is poured out into this empty bosom, so it is not possible that he whose mind is immersed in earthly care, should perceive with the smell of his soul the clear air of the new world. As the smell of a deadly poison disturbs the constitution of the body, so does pernicious sight disturb the peace of the mind.

As it is not possible that health and illness should be in one body without one being destroyed by the other, so it is not possible that money and love be in one house without one destroying the other. As it is not possible that glass remains whole in the neighbourhood of stone, so it is not possible that a saint should continually seek the sight of or discourse with a woman and that his purity should remain immaculate. As trees are eradicated by the perpetual blows [3] of violent waters, so is the love of the world [eradicated] from the heart by the violence of temptations assailing the body. As [4] solvent drugs purify the body from bad humours, so does the force of troubles purify the heart from affections. As it is not possible that a dead man should perceive the things of life, so the soul of a solitary, who is buried in solitude as in a grave, is exempt from the storm which usually blows on account of the apperception of things which pass among men. As it is not possible for him that spares his adversary in the field of

541 battle to avoid blows, so it is not possible that a champion

1) Cf. Rom. 8, 15 2) lit.: thick 3) ضربات 4) Introduction

should spare his body and that his soul should be saved from destruction. As childhood, when terrified by frightful sights runs to seek refuge at the skirts of its parents, so the soul, when troubled by the terror of temptations, hastens towards God to seek shelter in perpetual beseechings. And as temptations assail, to the same extent it multiplies its beseechings. But when it has free-space, it expands itself in distraction.

As those who are handed over to the judges in order to be scourged on account of their evils, become humble and immediately confess their faults, when they come suddenly before the scourges, so that their punishment is lessened and they are soon delivered through the agency of small troubles, but others of them are foolish and obstinate and their scourging is augmented and at last, after much scourging, with lacerated backs, they confess against their will, without gaining any profit; so when we are handed over from divine mercy unto justice, for the faults to which we have become accustomed without returning to the [good] direction, and the Judge of the world orders us to stretch ourselves before the rod of temptations, lest our scourging in the world to be, become heavy; if, as soon as the rod of the Judge approaches us, we humble ourselves and recollect our forfeits and confess before the avenger, we shall soon be saved by small temptations; but if we become obstinate in troubles, and confess not that we were the cause of them ourselves and that we have de-
542 served even more than these, and if we vituperate men and sometimes demons and sometimes even God's justice and assume the attitude of victors though we do not think and say that our works are like theirs, and if we do not think of the fact that God knows and recognizes us better than we do ourselves, and that the judgment of the Lord is over the whole earth and that no man is chastised without His orders, then our distresses assail us as they come, and our trouble becomes violent, and they hand us over the one to its fellow as in a chain, till we know ourselves and become humble and perceive our sins; for without apperception it is not possible for us even to come to [good] direction; then at last when we have suffered many troubles, we confess our sins in a confession without profit and without gathering from it any consolation. And also this that a man perceives his sins, is a gift which is allotted by God to the mind, when He sees that one

has been fatigued by various temptations, lest he depart this world under all these distresses and troubles, without profit; and [also this is a gift: to perceive] that we have not lacked insight on account of obstinacy, but on account of ignorance.

Some depart this world under these circumstances, without confessing that they are guilty, but litigating and vituperating. God, however, who is compassionate, looks to whether they humble themselves, that He may forgive them and give them expansion. Not only that He will put an end to their temptation, but He will even forgive their sins at a faint confession of their heart.

As a man who offers a large offering to the king and tries
543 to make his face benignant, so he that sheds tears in prayer before God, the king of all the worlds, makes to pass away all the degrees of his sins, and is even granted to see His face benignant. As the lamb that leaves the pen, and in its error comes before the den of the wolves, so is the solitary who separates himself from the communion of his fellows under the pretext of lonely dwelling, and constantly visits spectacles and the distraction of the town.

As a man who bears on his shoulder a pearl of great price and goes on an ill-famed way so that he is in perpetual fear of being robbed, so is he that bears the pearl of chastity and walks in the world the way of the enemies. Before he enters the chamber of the grave, which is the place of confidence, it is not to be expected that it will escape robbers and pluderers. Perhaps he that is not afraid, is able [to go that way]; even this man does not know either, on which spot or from where or at which moment he will suddenly be assailed and robbed of his hope. Some are robbed at the gate of their house, namely in old age.

As a man who drinks wine at the time of mourning and gets drunk and forgets all the suffering of his sorrow, so is he that, having got drunk by the love of God in this world which is a place of wailing, forgets his sorrow and all his distress and, through his drunkenness, becomes apathetic against all the affections of sin.

Whose heart is supported by hope in God, his soul is a swift beast of wings. He whose spirit is at all times exalted above the earth and who flies above the sky with the thoughts
544 of his deliberations, and is in continual prayer, is as a man

who has the wind as his driving animal, so that his enemy cannot reach him. Every time the latter seeks to join him, he flies away from him.

As a man who has an advocate in the court of justice, so is he that is compassionate to the troubled ones.

As a man who is amidst dangerous storms on the ocean and casts his utensils from the ship, so is he that despises the hindrances on his godly way in this world which is an ocean ready to suffocate him.

Hindrances will not fail. What doest thou in a house which is not thine? The sight of a corpse ought to be for thee an instruction concerning thy departure from here. Why doest thou multiply bonds to thyself? Gain thy life before thy light grow dim and thou seek help without finding it. This life has been given thee for repentance; do not spend it with various things.

The cross is the gate of mysteries; here takes place the entrance of the mind unto the knowledge of the heavenly mysteries. The knowledge of the cross is hidden within the sufferings of the cross. And in accordance with communion with them is the apperception of the cross, according to the word of the Apostle [1]). The greater place the suffering of Christ takes in us, the greater becomes our consolation in Christ. Consolation means contemplation, which is psychic sight. Sight gives birth to consolation. It is not possible that our soul produce spiritual fruits, except when our heart is dead to the world. For the Father quickens the soul that has died the death of Christ, in contemplation of all the worlds.

Another observation. If thou diest not to the world, the
543 spiritual Adam will not be quickened in thee. When a man, by being offered spiritually, dies to all dealings of this dwelling-place, and trusts his life to the life after the resurrection, Grace will dwell with him. And his behaviour is spiritually strengthened. And when he hates the world, he perceives the behaviour of the new man who is exalted above the filth of human habitation and is deemed worthy of divine revelations.

It is not possible for us to be dead to the world in the world, as long as our mind desires comforts, and the world, by its affairs, is placed before our senses and by apperception

1) Cf. Philipp. 4, 10

renews recollection and incites the body unto seeking what it wishes, by close contact with [worldly] things, by sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste.

The soul's being dead to the world is the heart's being free from the thought of its recollections and the soul's being void of the deliberations concerning [worldly] things and the will being cut off from the love of thinking upon them.

For it is not possible that our heart be in peace exalted above disturbance and in serenity of love lifted up above the world, when there are poured out into it recollections that renew through meetings with things by the senses, their receptacles. The mortification of the soul to the world cannot be acquired, if not the body be also beyond appereception and sight of things.

LXXX

546 ON VIGILS AND ON THE MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF LABOURS DURING THEM AND THAT IT IS NOT BECOMING THAT THE AIM OF OUR LABOURS SHOULD BE THE FULFILLING OF A QUANTITY BUT [TO WORK] IN FREEDOM AND WITH DISCRIMINATION AS CHILDREN OF GOD WHO WORK WITH THEIR FATHER IN THE ALERTNESS OF LOVE AND HOW PRECIOUS THE LABOUR OF VIGILS IS MORE THAN THAT OF ALL OTHER DUTIES AND WHAT THIS LABOUR IMPOSES ON THOSE WHO CHOOSE IT AND HOW THEY HAVE TO WALK IN IT AND ON THE GIFTS OF WHICH THEY ARE DEEMED WORTHY BY GOD AND ON THE BATTLES AGAINST THEM ON THE PART OF THE PRINCIPAL OF THIS WORLD

When thou desirest to rise for the service of thy vigils, then, with the help of our Lord, do as I say to thee. Bend thy knees as usually, and rise. Then do not begin with thy service at once. But when thou hast prayed and concluded and signed thy heart and thy limbs with the living sign, rise for a short time, in silence, till thy senses are at rest and thy emotions in peace. Then lift up thy inward gaze towards our Lord and beseech Him passionately that He may support thy

weakness. And let the words of thy tongue and the emotions of thy heart be to the pleasure of His will. And say thus, quietly in the prayer of thy heart: My Lord and my God, maker of thy creation, to whom our affections are revealed as well as the weakness of our nature and the strength of our fiend, do Thou guard me against his wickedness, for his power is strong and our nature is wretched and our strength is weak. Thou art benignant who art acquainted with our
547 weakness and bearest the difficulties of our illness; guard me from the disturbance of deliberations and the vehemence of affections and make me worthy of this holy service. Lest I spoil its taste by my affections and be found audacious before Thee. But with pure deliberations and in clearness of thought let me stand before Thee, as is beautiful to Thy holiness, for the splendour of which the chariot with the Seraphs, who sanctify and praise the holiness of Thy being with vibrating hot emotions to their delight, are not sufficient.

And with these deliberations thy heart will suddenly be opened by grace and thou wilt shed tears at the beginning of thy prayer. And thy deliberations will be purified by the recollection of the Lord. And thy soul will receive quiet and pure chastity. And while thy spirit is concentrated and pure, thou wilt begin thy service, without disturbance, and thou wilt continue it till the end, with delight.

It is becoming for us to continue our service, with complete freedom, apart from all disturbing thoughts of youth. If we see however that there is not much time and light dawns before we have finished, we should leave out on purpose and consciously one or two of the usual eulogies rather than to let perturbancy spoil the taste of our service and disturb also the Psalms of the morning.

If during thy service, a deliberation says to thee whisperingly: Hasten somewhat, let us do much work, then thou wilt soon be ready — do not look at it. If, however, it urges thee, recite in inverse order some marnita's [1]) of the Psalter; and every sentence, the sense of which involves the sign of the
548 cross, repeat it many times; and if it disturbs or troubles thee again: then cease reciting Psalms, and kneel in prayer, and say: I do not wish to count milestones, but I seek to enter

1) tenth part

the Apartment. Every way which leads me quickly to the aim, I will go. The people who fashioned the calf in the desert, walked forty years erring in the desert, went up and down mountains and hills, but the promised land they did not even see from afar.

And if, during thy vigils, long standing overcome thee by its duration, and thou become weak by fatigue, and deliberation say to thee, or rather that cunning one who speaks through it as through the serpent: Finish now, because thou hast no strenght to stand — then answer: Not so, but let us sit down, this is much better than to sleep. For even though I do not recite a Psalm, let my tongue be silent, while my mind is occupied with prayer and intercourse with God. To be awake is at any rate better than sleep.

Vigils do not wholly demand standing nor solely the reciting of Psalms. But some spend the whole night with the recitation of Psalms; some with kneelings and passionate prayers and humble prostrations on the earth; some with weeping and tears and bewailing of their sins.

It is said concerning one of our Fathers, that for forty years his prayer consisted in one sentence: I have sinned, as man: do Thou as God forgive me. And the Fathers and bethren
549 heard him repeating this sentence, weeping passionately, without ceasing. And this prayer alone, during night and day, took for him the place of service.

Some pass a small part of the evening with the recitation of Psalms and the rest of the night with songs and glorifications and hymns and other mournful melodies. Others assign the hours of the night to liturgical recitations; and between every two parts they enliven and enjoy themselves by reading the Scripture. Others impose upon themselves the rule, that they never shall bend their knees, not even in the prayer forming the conclusion to a *mannita*[1], though this is the custom of those who practice vigils. But they pass the whole night in one attitude.

Concerning one of the saints, therefore, it is said that because the demon of fornication made war against him and did not neglect to use against him any means, he gave himself to the labour of vigils and imposed upon himself the rule,

1) See above, p. 357, note.

that he would never bend his knees, but stood the whole night, his eyes open, without bending his knees, till morning.

All these distinctions are in the labour of vigils, and by them the virtous put off the old man who is depraved by the desires of seduction and put on Christ and are saved. On account of these kinds of labour performed in wisdom, the saints are deemed worthy of ecstasy caused by divine revelation, which is exalted above fleshly thought.

While the virtuous in their vigils enjoy such various kinds
550 of things, they pass, without dejection the whole space of the long hours of night, while their soul exults and rejoices and forgets the coat of flesh, woven from affections, with which it was clad. And on account of the delight and the joy of their heart, they do not remember sleep. For they imagine themselves to have put off the body and to be already in the state which comes after the resurrection. And in consequence of their great joy, they leave their Psalms from time to time, and they fall on their faces on account of the power of the gladness which moves in their soul. And the whole long night is to them as the day, and darkness as sunrise, on account of the hope which elevates their heart and makes them drunk with its thought and by the blazing of their mind which burns by the recollection of future good. And while the tongue continually plays on the spiritual harp, mind is occupied with its own things; sometimes it turns towards the understanding of the sentences, sometimes it pushes away the foreign [1]) deliberation which tries to enter in. Sometimes, when it becomes weary, it turns towards the contents of the daily recitation. And the recollection which it has gathered from it and collected in its treasury, causes at these times emotions at which the mind delights, so that there is no room at all for foreign deliberations.

And then quickly the mind is drawn towards the understanding of prayer and Psalms, lest, by abiding too long in this state — profitable though meditation upon them may be — it should be bereaved of discourse with God and the light of contemplation which the mind is wonted to receive from prayer without distraction in which it speaks in loneliness with its Lord
551 through the secrecy of the heart, in humility of deliberations.

1) ܓܝܘܪܐ = proselyte

In these and similar things they pass their whole lifetime, every one of them pleasing his Lord by his labours in accordance with his degree and his power, in total application of will.

If anyone, however, desire to give his body some rest, he may finish and sit down [turned] towards the East. As long however as he is sitting, he shall not allow his mind to be idle; but he shall meditate and think and deliberate on the greatness of this duty; and on what his performance is; and how it is done, and how great his crown, and how glorious the fruit of his labour is; and what watchfulness it demands; and how the ancients have dealt with it, and of what things they have been deemed worthy through the fulfilment of their struggles; and how by the mercy of Jesus he was turned from the world, he that was occupied with vain labours the end of which is destruction from God and reprehension through sins; and how this mercy brought him to this performance of the angels, the hope of which is a veracious hope, and its joy is a joy which is beyond the power of distress and its confidence a confidence which cannot be fallacious. For a man may work ever so much, his labours are small compared with that which he will receive at his end in the pledge of good things, to the delight of his soul.

While these and similar deliberations are in his heart and he is astonished at them he places his mind in the spiritual chariot and lets it fly and be occupied with all the holy Fa-
552 thers of all generations, the inheritance of whose behaviour he possesses, [thinking of] how every one of them has accomplished, with various districtions, this spiritual service; and of how they have abandoned the inhabited world and mankind and have withdrawn themselves from the allurements of the world and from the disturbancies of life and have gone and hidden themselves in mountains and caverns and removed and and lonely places, because they saw that this course of life cannot be accomplished among men, on account of the many hindrances; and have become dead in their lifetime for the sake of life in God, erring through desert places and between rocks as those who have lost their way; people [of such worth] that every single one's glory is not equalled by the whole world. Some of them lived on rough and steep rocks, some at the foot of mountains, or in deep valleys; some in the

caves of the ground and in caverns, as those who dig after foxes in order to surprise them; some in graves and on mountain cliffs. Some have constructed a small hovel in the desert and passed there the rest of their life; some have built a small pen on the top of a mountain, viz. a small cell, and have dwelt therein with pleasure as if in a royal palace. And because they did not care for their livelihood, they only thought of how each of them should please God and accomplish his struggle beautifully.

And what kind of a life did these saints lead in these places?
553 Did they live with the body, or a life above flesh and blood? Did they not become pusillanimous in that total desert? Did the power of endurance not abate during that long time, did the body not become weak during that prolonged period, through their being deprived of the use of natural needs? How was human life preserved in them? And in all this, what struggles have they endured and what troubles! How strenuously and without perturbance did they endure various difficult wars in which the evil spirits assailed them! How did they not in their life time — even till the end — become relaxed so as to neglect their difficult and wearying labours? How did their spirit not become sorry through this utter loneliness, cut off from all visible consolations? Is there really all this strength in human nature; and how did divine power preserve them without injury, under all those various temptations; and how did it prepare for every one of them by various provisions, in accordance with one's dwelling place, the fulfilling of the need which was necessary for him? Some of them were sustained by a bird. Behold, these last sixty years I have the half of my bread from such a bird. Others are sustained by some tree or palm in a supernatural way, as one of them has said, viz. the bishop who repented in the desert. I am now in this desert nine and forty years. God has granted me life
554 through this palm. And so it was with the saint who was in his monastery, in a fallen state, for six months; and who fled and went unto the interior of the desert in order to repent his sin. When his stomach ached through and through, the angel came and cured him. Some are sustained by the beasts; as that blessed one who dwelt in a cavern in the desert of Sodom. Some, who are dwelling in the desert near the inhabited world, are furnished by men, as that strenuous man whom

Serapion visited; and as the blessed Martinianus who dwelt in a lonely island and was visited by a merchant two times a year.

Where no habitation was near and there were no ways whatever, [divine power] visited them through an angel, as is said concerning the blessed Apelles who dwelt in the declivity of a mountain in a small grotto. His work consisted therein that he offered prayer to God during the whole day and a hundred times during the night. His food, without care on his part, came in the desert through an angel. He was clad in a shirt, and on his head he wore a small cowl; and these remained on him in the desert, without becoming worn out. Doest thou see, how God cares for his soldiers in every respect?

Others fed upon roots; others upon eatable greens, which grow of themselves; others upon crops which had to be watered and upon dried vegetables, which are sown on purpose; others upon the fruits of trees. To others a bed of parsley and a
555 streaming well were sufficient for the wants of this ephemeral life, in so far as the body is maintained by them, apart from profitable recollections, which at these times are stirred by grace, to the consolation of man.

When a man is occupied in his mind with these and similar things, he becomes drunk as it were with living wine, and forgets himself. Then he sees himself again and wonders that during the whole of this travel through the desert and during the meeting with saints, no injury at all has met the mind. And now it seems to him as if he were with those saints and saw them manifestly. And on account of this recollection of the behaviour of the saints which the mind imagines to itself through the remembrance of their tales, and through meditation upon them, dejection vanishes; and languor is driven forth; the limbs are strengthened; sleep is driven away from the eyelids; the spirit is strengthened and throws fear away; distraction is crushed heroically; the mind is concentrated; a fervent heat burns in the heart and unspeakable joy arises in the soul. Further sweet tears moisten the cheeks; spiritual exultation makes the mind drunk; inexplainable consolations are received by the soul; hope supports the heart and strengthens it. Then it is to him as if he dwelled in heaven, during his vigils that are so full of good things.

By these and similar ways those proceed who perform vigils with discrimination. For there is nothing which makes the mind

556 pure and glad and enlightens it and expels evil deliberations so that the soul exults, to such an extent as continual vigils do.

For this reason all the Fathers were persevering in this labour of vigils, and clung to the rule of abiding awake in the nights, during the whole course of their behaviour; especially because they heard our Saviour in several places warning us earnestly, by His living word: Watch ye therefore and pray always [1]). And: Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation [2]). And again: Pray and do not faint [3]) and so on. And it was not sufficient to warn us by words only, but He gave us even an example in His person thereby that He always honoured the practice of prayer above all other things. And therefore He perpetually separated Himself, also for prayer, not arbitrarily, but chose for time, night, and for place, the desert; that we, avoiding all crowds and tumult, might be able to pray in solitude, as is becoming.

Also all the revelations which happened to the saints, on various subjects, — whether they served to make them prudent or to common instruction — usually happened to them during the night and at the time of prayer. Therefore our Fathers have received this elevated instruction concerning prayer as it were from Christ; and the state of waking during prayer they chose in the first place, according to the order of the Apostle,
557 for solitude and reclusion from the whole world, in order that they might be, without a break, in the vicinity of God, through continual prayer. They fled into solitude not only lest anything should prevent them from constant prayer, but lest any foreign thing from without should hurt them and disturb their pure mind, and their gladdening vigils should be troubled, which are the light of the soul. They also fed themselves moderately lest the vapour which rises from a full stomach should obscure the mind so as to deprive it of its discriminating quiet and take away the spiritual delight which is granted through prayer. In short: they were zealous in every respect that they might be able to speak with God without a screen, as much as possible, the mind not being hindered by anything at all.

Therefore, because Satan knows, that all these good things are collected in this wonderful performance which occupies the place of the soul with regard to all the sundry members of

1) Luke 21, 36 2) Matth. 26, 41 3) 1 Thess. 5, 17

the body of excellence, he envies it more than all other duties the which all men know by experience and there is nothing in man at which he aims and against which he directs his zeal, and which he prepares himself to combate more than vigils — whether those of a solitary, or of a coenobite, or a layman. Here he cannot but show himself openly, in manifest war against man, without an intermediary, without perceiving
558 at all the gifts which those receive who perform vigils; but he envies them on account of their chaste habit of standing, and through their perseverance, against sleep, in waking, and glorifications, and singing of Psalms, and prayers and inclinations, and stretching [of the hands], and prostrations, and lying down on the earth, and beseechings of the heart during the whole night. He is especially envious because others lie on their beds as dead at whom he makes mock, according to his pleasure, by sordid visions and impure phantasies, and immerses them during the whole night as it were in mire by various phantasies during the heavy sleep that has its origin in a full stomach — whereas these depart hence with their soul unto the waking state of resurrection. And he sees them, though still bound under the curtain of the body, while perpetually waves of mortality assail them and they are confined by a life limited under the government of the air of this world — still showing in their mortal nature a type of future behaviour.

A great power possesses prayer which is offered at night-time, more than that offered in the day. Therefore all the saints used to pray during the night, while they were combating against the heaviness of the body and the sweetness of sleep, and expelling bodily nature. As also the Prophet says: I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim [1]), while he was sighing in passionate prayer, from the depth of his heart. And further: I rose in the midst of night to praise Thee because of Thy judgments, Thou righteous one [2]). For every request which they demanded from
559 God with power, they armed themselves with prayer in vigils, and at once they received what they had asked.

There is nothing so feared, even by Satan, as prayer which is offered during vigils. And even if it takes place with distraction, it does not return fruitless, unless that which is asked,

1) Ps. 6, 6 2) ?

should be what is not becoming. Therefore he engages himself in severe battle with them, in order to turn them away from this performance, if possible, namely those who are constantly at it. Those who are somewhat strengthened against his evil stratagems, and have tasted the gifts of God which are granted during vigils, and experienced personally the greatness of God's help which has presented itself to them, despise him utterly, him and all his devices.

Therefore, more than the whole community of the church, the order of the solitaries wages war with them, in the struggle of prayer and vigils, in the first place, because they are free from visible things; in the second place, because of their continual solitude. For, because they are free from incitements, he is not able to turn away their deliberations from the thought of God and to detain them from continual beseechings, in their war against him, so that from the beginning of their apprenticeship till their old age they do not neglect the labour of vigils in any way, but it is a performance well known to them, to stand during the whole night; even as we learn from the written stories of every one of them.

360 For Mar Athanasius, says in his story on the mirror of the solitaries[1]), that he kept vigils plentifully, so that he passed the main part of the nights without sleep. And it was in this point that Satan found an occasion to wage his first battle against the victorious one; and this happened while he was still a boy. We often read in many stories, that he did not neglect vigils during his whole lifetime, as he did not even when he visited others; as for instance, when he went to see the blessed Father Paul, when they ate their meal [furnished to them] through a bird, and stood in prayer during the whole night. Which of the saints, though possessing all the virtues together, could neglect this duty, and not be reckened to be idle without it? For this is the light of the mind. By it the intellect is elevated and the spirit concentrated, the mind flies [on high] and gazes at spiritual things and becomes young and illuminated in prayer. By it the goods of future life, and the presents the mysteries of which are indicated in the holy scriptures are given as a pledge. Therefore our Fathers did not

1) Athanasius in his *Epistola ad Monachos* does not speak of vigils. Or is Evagrius' work meant here?

neglect this labour from the beginning of their apprenticeship till [they reached] the measure of perfection, so that, even at the time of old age which when a man can hardly stand on his feet, they did not let languor gain power over themselves so as to detain them from continual vigils by giving their
561 bodies rest in a short sleep; as we also learn from the stories which are told concerning that perfect image of excellence and of all spiritual beauties, I mean the blessed Arsenius. When that famous man of Skete had withdrawn himself from all intercourse with men and removed his dwelling-place to a long distance even from the brethren, he gave himself wholly to the wonderful performance of vigils. His standing during vigils differed also from that of all the Fathers of his time. To which also his story is witness. On the evening before Sunday he set his back to the sun and stretched his hands unto heaven, till the sun rose before him. Again in another place: he passed the whole night in vigils; and when, towards morning he wished to take rest, because nature demanded it, while he struggled with sleep, he said: Go and leave me, evil maid. And so he expelled sleep quickly and remained awake. And this happened at that high age, concerning which it is said that it had bent him.

And in order that his assiduity in vigils may better be known, let us hear another story concerning him; how he persevered during all his old age and weakness, a man ninety
562 years old. Once he called two of his disciples, who were highly esteemed Fathers, and said to them: Because the demons struggle with me and I am not sure that they will not betray me during sleep, [come and] labour with me this night in vigils, and guard me and look whether I fall asleep during vigils. So one sat down at his right hand and one at his left, from the evening till the morning. [Afterwards] they said: We have slept and waked, but we have not seen him sleeping at all. And when dawn began, whether he assumed such an attitude as to make us believe that he slept, or whether sleep really overwhelmed him, we do not know. Three times [we heard] his breath leave his nostrils, then he rose and said to us: I have slept, did I not? We answered and said to him: We do not know it, for we have slept.

In these delightful labours of vigils those rejoiced who were the leaders of our course. What then was the delight which

the glorious Arsenius gathered from this vexation with which he tortured his body to such an extent? It is clear that he did not vainly persevere in all these things. For we see that not only his inner man became enlightened on account of his delight, by the exalted ray, but also his outward man, which is material and corruptible nature, was clad with the glory with which all the saints will be clad in the end, on account of the variation which the whole inner nature of men undergoes.

563 Wherefrom do we learn this? Once one of the brethren went to the cell of Aba Arsenius and looked through the window and saw the Father standing who was wholly as burning fire. For this brother who had gone to see the Father, was worthy of this sight: he did not belong to the small but to the great ones. The blessed one was famous on account of his exalted behaviour and all Fathers desired to see him. And because they especially desired to see him, [it was] as Aba Macarius said to him: Why doest thou flee from us! Therefore the strangers who came to Skete desired chiefly to see him and to receive his blessing. — When that brother knocked at his door, the Father came outdoors. And when he saw that his visitor was astonished at what he saw, he said to him: Was it time for thee to knock? Hast thou seen anything? The other answered: No. So he dismissed him.

And what shall I say concerning the blessed Pacomius? The counterpart of the former, and among others the chief, the valiant in strife, the fervent and heroic in his vigils, the man who passed a long time fighting against the demons as a glorious champion, in the way of the holy Antonius, who, because many demons used to come to him during the nights, asked God during his vigils that He might free him from sleep, so that night and day he should be without sleep, so as to be able to subdue the power of the Fiend. As it has

564 been said: Let me not turn my back before having crushed them, for they are powerless against the faith of the Lord. — Then this gift was granted him, as he had asked, for a long time. And because his heart was pure — the sight of his soul having been purified through vigils and solitude and prayer — he saw God, who is invisible, as it were in a mirror.

These are the fruits of vigils, and these are the boons of those who perform them, and these are the crowns [granted on account of persevering in] this struggle.

Thou also, o brother, if thou desirest to be the fellow of these saints and an heir of their behaviour, cling to solitude, without dejection, that thou also mayest persevere in the work of prayer without a break. Bear its troubles, in order to acquire its good. And if thy body should be bent down by different reasons and desist from labour, and thou shouldst not be able to accomplish the works of solitude as usual, and thou shouldst begin to be despised by thy heart and to become dejected and worried — because this is the work of the heart, especially for those who have the right intention: not to desist from reprehending and reproving — do not say: Woe to me, that I am idle, and it would be better for me to be in the world and to perform any work whatever, and not possess an idle reputation of solitude and reclusion, and yet to cease from performance, being a solitary and lonely, yet afar from duties.
565 Do not say this. For God's lovingkindness bears the load of our weakness; He asks man from what he has, and He knows us better than we do ourselves what our strength is.

When thy strength is sufficient, work. And even if thou art not able to perform but little, thou must bear with joy the laziness of thy solitude and be patient. And thou must know that, if thou leavest solitude, even the thought will not stay with thee which causes thee to be chastised by thy conscience on account of laziness. On the contrary: many circumstances will injure thee on account of distraction and laxity of the senses, which destroy even that which has been performed by thee before, because the grace of solitude has been taken from thee. And thou wilt fall into temptations and many circumstances will befall thee, of which thou didst not think.

If thou doest fall into temptations, do not despair. For there is no merchant who travels on seas and roads without suffering losses; and there is no husbandman who simply reaps the whole; and there is no champion who suffers not blows and strokes even if he gains victory in the end. So in the things of God, in the things of the merchants who go this invisible road, there are profits and losses, blows and victory. When thou art hit, do not turn thy back. Pardon me.

LXXXI

566 AN ANSWER TO A BROTHER WHO HAD ASKED HIM WHY WHEN OUR LORD HAS DEFINED MERCY AS SIMILITUDE TO THE GREATNESS OF THE FATHER IN HEAVEN THE SOLITARIES HONOUR SOLITUDE MORE THAN IT? AND AN APOLOGY OF THIS POINT AND THAT IT IS NOT BECOMING TO NEGLECT THE DISTRESSED AND SICK WHEN THEY ARE NEAR

It is well that thou hast brought forward from the Gospel a comparison and a tested example for the great duty of solitude, as if we were opponents to it or tried to reject it as something superfluous. For our Lord has defined mercy as the similitude to the Father by which those who perform it, can approach Him. This is true. And we, the solitaries, do not honour solitude without mercy, though we try to remain far from care and trouble, as much as possible. Not that we deny necessary things, when they present themselves, but we care for solitude, because in it we are constantly with God in lonely intercourse, by which it is more possible to be purified from perturbance and to approach unto quiet of mind, though such cases are rare. But when it is necessary, we will not neglect mercifulness, compelling ourselves perpetually to be inwardly full of mercy toward all kinds of rational beings, at all times.

For so the doctrine of our Lord orders, and this is the distinction of our solitude, and it is not due to fortune. So
567 none of us neglects to show this inward virtue, — when the time corresponds with the work and the necessity — making known his love openly, by deeds; especially those who have not laid themselves wholly under the rule of solitude do so. But solitude to such ones means that they never meet anyone, except once a week. They have not cut themselves off, by the definition of their rule, from showing their fellow man deeds of mercy; only that one does so who is very devoted and solitary so that he avoids the sight of men. For we know, that without love of the fellow-man, the mind is not able to become illuminated by intercourse with and love unto God. Therefore, which of the says solitaries, who possessed food and

clothing, could see his neighbour hungry and naked and persevere in withholding his hand?

Or which of them, when his brother according to the flesh was sick and tormented and destitute of visitors, has honoured the rule of his reclusion more than the life of his fellow, on account of love of solitude?

Where, however, such circumstances, are not at hand, we keep in mind love and mercy unto the fellow man. Where practice is near, God demands from us plainly that we perform it actually.

568 This is well known, that if we have acquired nothing, we are not allowed to expose ourselves to care and disturbance for the sake of the poor. But it is demanded of us [to give] from what we have.

And when our dwelling place is far from the habitation of men and from intercourse with and sight of them, it is not necessary for us to leave our cell and our solitary and lonely dwelling-place and proceed erring through the world in order to visit the sick and to be occupied with similar practice. For it is known that he that does so descends from greatness to smallness.

If however the recluse live in the dwelling place of many and is near to men through his constant dwelling with them, and he can take rest when others are fatigued — be he healthy or ill — it is incumbent upon him to occupy himself with practice, without asking largely from others. But if he see the brother according to the flesh and to profession, in trouble, or rather: Christ rejected and vexed, and he flee and hide himself, pretending a sham solitude — he that acts thus, is without mercy.

Do not remind me of John of Thebais and Arsenius and the like. For who has given himself to such deeds and cared for the sick or the poor, and has despised solitude? Do not approach unto their stories. For if thou art far from all comfort and all meeting with men as they were, thou art allowed to despise such works of [practice]. If however thou art far
569 from the state of the perfect and continually occupied with bodily labours and occupations, why then doest thou despise a commandment which suits thy measure, taking refuge with the grand behaviour of the saints, a behaviour to which thou art not near?

As to me, I will not neglect to cite the example of Macarius the Great, which was written, as it were, to rebuke those who despise their brethren. One day he went to visit some one who was sick. When he asked him whether he desired anything, he answered: I want some fresh bread. Those solitaries, namely, usually baked bread for a year; so was the custom of those places. Then that blessed man, who was ninety years old, went from Skete the town of Alexandria, forty miles and more, carrying with him dry bread in his cowl. There he changed it and brought the sick what he desired.

And an other, who was his equal, did what is still greater, a certain Agathon, exquisite above all the solitaries of his time, a man who loved silence and solitude better than all others. Once he went to a festival, in order to sell what he had made with his hands. There he found a stranger, lying in the street, sick. He hired a house and stayed with him, working with his hands and making expenses on his behalf and paying the hire of the house. So he served him for six months, till the sick had recovered. Then he said, as the story runs, I
570 wished that I could find a leper and give him my body and take his. — This is perfect love: let us resemble our Fathers, that we may be thought worthy of grace, as they were.

Those who fear God, my beloved, are provided for so that they keep the commandments of our Lord without difficulty, even although that seems possible to them only through labours, and danger is thought to be incurred for its sake. Christ has defined and limited their totality to two commandments, which make up the sum of them all. I mean the love of God, and what He taught to be the like of this: love unto His image. The possession of the former is the aim of spiritual contemplation; that of the second, of contemplation and practice. Now, because God's nature is simple and not composite and invisible and not subject to want, the heart in its occupation equally does not require practice, nor bodily performance, nor material motion. Its performance is simple, and, on account of partial union in the [human] intellect, is in accordance with the simple nature of its adorable cause, which is exalted above the apperception of the senses and the flesh.

The second commandment, love of mankind, is to be accomplished in a double way, in accordance with its double nature. I mean, that we accomplish it with the heart, invisibly, and

at the same time with the body, manifestly; but those things which are accomplished by practice, happen also in secret and in cooperation with the heart.

For, as man's nature is composed of two parts, — namely body and soul — so all things regarding him are provided
571 in a double way, in accordance with the double character of his constitution. As everywhere practice is anterior to contemplation, so it is impossible for man to elevate himself unto that elevated part, unless he has accomplished before, by practice, that which is lower.

Therefore, let no one venture to speak concerning the acquisition of love of his fellowmen, as if he possessed it already in his soul, if the part is still wanting which has to be accomplished by the body, according to the opportunity for practice granted by strength, time and place. Then by faith has to be acquired that part of love which is received and recognized by the heart. When, on account of these things, we have been made ourselves known as faithful and true, as far as possible, then power is given to the soul to stretch itself towards the grand part of exalted and divine contemplation, by means of simple emotions and without comparison.

Where man has no opportunity to fulfill love of his fellow man practically by visible and by bodily things, it is sufficient in the eyes of God, that we keep love of our fellowman with our mind only, especially if we are able constantly to administer the service of that universal part, that is more excellent. If however we are destitute of the totality of that universal part, we should fill up this gap by the lower commandment, namely by apperceptible practice, consisting therein that, according to the time happening, we should provide for the comfort of our brethren, by wearying our body; lest our liberty
572 become an opportunity for the flesh, in that we should occupy ourselves with idle things under the pretext of lonely intercourse. For it is known, that it is not allowed to demand from him who is wholly deprived of human intercourse and who is wholly occupied with God, being dead to all beings because of his being deprived of them — that he should serve men.

He, however, whose rule of solitude forbids intercourse except on one day every week, and who, after the completion of his rule, meeting and mingling and consoling himself with

man, neglects the trouble of his brethren and pretends to keep the rule of his week of prohibition, is anathema. For it is manifest that it is through a lack of mercy and on account of presumption and fallacious deliberations that such a one does not condescend to occupy himself with such things.

He that neglects the sick, shall not see light. And who turns away his face from one in distress, may his day be dark. And who despises the cry of the vexed, may the sons of his house grope in darkness.

Let us not dishonour the great name of solitude by our ignorance. Every duty has its time and place and distinction. And then its service is accepted by God who knows all. The service that deviates from this, is idle; for all measures have to be brought to completion.

He that hopes that he will be consoled and visited in his misery by others, has to humble himself, so that he may be of use to his fellow man when the latter is tempted. Then during his service in solitude he may be joyful and free from presumption and the seduction of the demons.

573 It has been said by one of the holy Fathers, Euagrius, one of the initiated, that there is nothing which frees the solitary from the demon of haughtiness and aids to the attainment of the domain of chastity when the passion of fornication is burning, as to visit those who are thrown on their bed and vexed by bodily troubles. Great is the angelic service of solitude, when it is mingled with such a discrimination, for humbleness is needed. For we are plundered without our knowing it.

We have not said these things, my brethren, that we should despise the duty of solitude; for we have everywhere insisted upon it. We are not now found to contradict our own words, and no one should pick out a single word from our argumentation and take this in his hand without discrimination, neglecting the rest. For I remember that in several places I have said with emphasis, that if a man should happen to be in his cell in total idleness, on account of the necessity of weakness, even then he should not choose to leave it completely and to perform his service outside it rather than to be idle, within. I have spoken of leaving the cell completely; but if a necessary practice presents itself, which demands some weeks, during which he may gain relief or the life of a fellow-man, he should not deem this idleness. If there is anyone who thinks

himself to be one of the perfect and exalted above all that is here, on account of his continually being with God, and his
574 being far from all visible practice, he rightly withdraws himself even from these things. Great is the labour of discrimination, to him that is spoken to by God. May He in His mercy, give us to accomplish the work of Him that has said: Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them [1]. To whom be glory and honour from the whole creation for ever and ever. Amen.

LXXXII

HOW MUCH HONOUR HUMILITY POSSESSES AND HOW HIGH ITS RANK IS

I dessire to open my month, my brethren, to speak on the elevated place of humility; but I am filled with fear, as a man who is conscious of the fact, that he will speak concerning God in a tale of his own speech. For humility is the garment of divinity; for the word which became man, put it on and spoke in it with us, through our body. And every one who puts it on in truth, by humility takes the likeness of Him that has descended from His height and concealed the splendour of His majesty and hidden His glory, lest the creation should perish by the sight of Him. For the creation was not able to see Him without His being united to a part of it which He should assume and speak with them through it; then the creation was able to hear the word of His mouth, face to face.

The children of Israel were not able to listen to His voice, while He spoke with them from within the cloud; then should the creation be able to bear the sight of Him openly? For the children of Israel were so troubled that they said to Moses: Let us speak with thee, and listen thou to His words for us;
575 but let Him not speak with us, lest we die [2]. And so terrible was the sight, that even the intermediary said: I fear and tremble. For on mount Sinai the splendour of His glory revealed itself, and the whole mountain smoked and was shaken from

1) Matthew 7, 12 2) Exodus 20, 29

fear of His revelation that took place on it, so that even the beasts which approached the foot of the mountain, died. And all the children of Israel, on the order of Moses, prepared themselves, every one purifying himself for three days in order to be worthy of listening to the sound of God's speech and of seeing His revelation. And when the moment came, they were not able to bear the sight of His light, and the vehemence of the sound of His thunder.

But now that He has poured out His grace on the world by His coming, not in earthquake nor in fire, nor with a terrible and vehement sound — but descending as the rain upon the lamb's fleece, and as the soft dew drops which softly descend upon the earth — it has pleased Him to speak with us in a different way, concealing His majesty in the cover of flesh, speaking to us while being in us, in the garment which Providence had woven from the womb of the virgin, so that we, seeing Him speak with us as one of our race, should not be terrified by the sight of Him. Therefore, every one who puts on the garment in which our Creator appeared, by means of a body full of holiness, puts on Christ. For with the likeness in which He appeared to His creation and in which He dealt
576 with us, He desired to clad His inner man and in it He desired to appear to His fellow men, and with it [He desired] to be adorned in stead of with the garment of honour and outward glory. And therefore the creatures prostrate themselves as to a lord before every one whom they see being clad with this likeness, silent or speaking, on account of the honour of their Lord with which they saw Him clad and in which He wandered about.

Which of the creatures should not be intimidated by the sight of the humble? Yet before the glory of humility revealed itself to all, this sight full of holiness was despised by them. But now that He has caused its majesty to dawn before the eye of the worlds, every man honours this likeness, wheresoever it shows itself. For through the mediation of it, the creation became worthy of receiving the sight of its Creator. And therefore [humility] is not despised even by the enemies of truth. And though he that has acquired it, should be a beggar in comparison with all creatures, yet he that has learned it, is honoured on account of it as if he were clad with crown and purple. No one will ever hate the humble nor assail him

with a word, nor despise him. And because his Lord loves him, he is beloved by every one. Every one loves him, every one cherishes him. And wherever he comes, he is looked upon as an angel of light and distinguished by [signs of] honour. When the sage and the learned speak, they are ordered to be silent in order to give the humble an opportunity to speak. The eyes of everyone look on his mouth [in order to know] which word will come forth from it. Every one awaits his
577 words, as words from God. The sense of his few words is investigated as the words of a philosopher. Sweet are his words to the ear of the sages, more than honeycomb is to the palate of those who taste it. And by everyone he is reckoned as a God, though he be simple in his words and of mean aspect. He that speaks of the humble in a despising way, is not reckoned as one living, but as one who opens his mouth against God. And the more despicable he is in his own eyes, the more honour is shown to him on the part of the creatures.

The humble approaches the beasts of prey and as soon as their eye rests on him, their wildness is tamed and they come to him and accompany him as their master, wagging their tails and licking his hands and his feet. For they smell from him the smell which spread from Adam before his transgression, when the beasts gathered near him and he gave them names, in Paradise — the smell which was taken from us and given back to us anew by Christ through His advent, which made the smell of the human race sweet.

And when the humble approaches the deadly reptiles, as soon as the touch of his hands attains to their bodies, the virulence of their deadly poison is cooled and with his hands he crushes them as if they were locusts [1].

And when he approaches the children of man they look upon him as upon their lord. Why do I mention the children
578 of man? Because, notwithstanding all the evil and stubbornness of the demons and all the pride of their own mind, as soon as they meet the humble, they become as dust: all their hardness becomes weak, their tricks become craftless, their cunnings idle.

Now that we have shown in how great honour humility

1) With this passage is to be compared the *Book of the Dove*, p. 80

stands with God and how great a power is hidden in it, we will clearly show what humility is, and when a man will be deemed worthy of receiving it in its fulness, as it is. And we shall make a distinction between him who is humble in some respects and him that has been deemed worthy of veracious humility.

Humility is a mysterious power, which the perfect saints receive when they have reached accomplishment of behaviour. And this power is not granted except to those who, by the power of Grace, have personally accomplished the whole of excellence, in so far as nature in its domain is able to do this. For humility is all-comprehending excellence. And therefore we cannot deem every man humble, without discrimination, but only those who have been deemed worthy of the rank mentioned. Not every one who in his nature is peaceful or quiet or discrete or without blame, has reached the rank of humility.

But a humble one in truth is he that, possessing inwardly something worthy of being proud of, does not extol himself, but is as dust in his own thoughts. Nor do we call humble him that humbles himself on account of the recollection of his low characteristics or trespasses, which he remembers in order that his heart may become contrite and his mind with-
579 drawn from impulses of haughtiness, however praiseworthy this may be. For he still possesses deliberations of haughtiness. Humility however he does not possess, but, by various means, he seeks to draw it towards himself. And however praiseworthy this may be, as I have said, he does not yet possess humility; he asks for it, but it is not his.

A perfectly humble one is he that does not need to find out a cause which should make his mind humble. But he has fulfilled all these, and possesses humility as something natural, without bestowing any labour upon it; so that, even though he has received within him the great gift of which all creatures are not worthy — namely his [humble] nature — yet he is deemed a sinner and a simple man in his own eyes. And though he has penetrated into the mysteries of all spiritual kinds [of beings], and possesses great wisdom concerning all the creatures, he knows with perfect certainty that he knows nothing. And this he is not by any intermediary; but without compulsion he is so in his heart.

Can it be possible that man should be so, that nature can thus change him? No. But do not doubt for this reason. For this mysterious strength which he has received, which makes him perfect in all excellence, without labour, is the strength which the blessed Apostles received under the aspect of fire. And on account of it our Saviour ordered them that they should not leave Jerusalem before having received the strength from on high, namely the Comforter which is the Spirit.

And this is the spirit of visions. And this is what is said concerning them in the Scripture: To the humble the mysteries are revealed[1]). This means that the humble are deemed worthy
580 of receiving within them this spirit of revelations which explains the mysteries. And therefore it has been said by holy men, that humbleness makes the soul perfect by divine revelations. Therefore, no one should venture to think concerning himself that he has personally reached the rank of humility, on account of a single thought of contrition which has once risen [in his heart], or on account of a few tears which he has shed, or on account of one beautiful attribute which he possesses by nature or which he has acquired by compulsion; for he would in that case have acquired that which is the summit of all mysteries and the sum of all excellence in the domain of small labours and reckon these as the whole gift. But if a man has vanquished all contrary spirits, and if none of all the works of excellence fails him, for which he has not laboured in order to possess them, and if he has vanquished and subdued all forteresses of resistance, and if he then perceives with his spirit that his soul has received the gift, while the Spirit witnesses to his spiritaccording to the word of the Apostle, then this is the summit of humility. Blessed is he that has acquired it, for he at all times embraces Jesus' bosom.

But if a man asks: What shall I do? How can I acquire it? By what means shall I become worthy of receiving it? For, if I compel myself and think that I have acquired it, I see that unperceived contrary impulses err through my mind, and, consequently, I fall into despair.

581 He that asks this, is to be answered thus: It is expedient for the disciple to be as his master, and for the slave as his lord. Look at Him who has commanded this and who grants

1) Cf. Ps. 25, 9

the gift, how He acquired it; and strive thou to become like Him; then thou canst do it. For He has said: The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me[1]). Doest thou see how humility is to be acquired by the accomplishment of all excellence? So that we have to imitate Him that has commanded it. ‚The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head'[2]). To whom be glory from all those who have become perfect and have been sanctified and become accomplished, in all generations, with the Father who sent Him and the Holy Ghost, now and always and for ever and ever. Amen.

1) John 14, 30 2) Matt. 8, 20

GENERAL REGISTER

[The Roman figures refer to the pages of the Introduction, the Arabic ones to those of Bedjan's text as printed on the margin of the translation].

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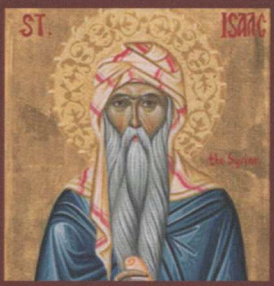

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